

IDENTIFYING INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA
IN WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION
AND EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

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by
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Sassy Frassy Inc., a non-profit organization, provides services for young women in Kentucky, a state with a high incidence of childhood abuse. If women receive training on intergenerational trauma and its adverse effects, they will acquire the tools to identify their trauma. The project occurred over six weeks and consisted of a phenomenological qualitative methodology, including questionnaires, group discussions, journaling exercises, and reflection summaries. The participants who engaged in this training were educated about trauma, equipped with tools for healing, and empowered to apply their learnings.

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I am also deeply moved and grateful to all the study participants who attended the six-week training program for their commitment to completing the exercises, surveys, and journaling assignments. This work could not have been possible without you.

Finally, I thank God, who opened my spiritual eyes and heart to see and know the purpose of my suffering and trust me, a flawed woman, to fulfill a worthy calling. My

heart is full of gratitude that God has kept me through it all, and I am hopeful that I may bring glory to His name through this small sacrificial offering.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my loving husband, Olden Warren. Olden supported me in the long and arduous journey of doctoral studies. He has conceded his time, our companionship, and his own needs to provide space, encouragement, and resources for the time, energy, and effort that were diverted for this project. It is from his sacrifices that this project and doctorate degree have become a reality for both of us.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Adverse Childhood Experience
CBP	Component-Based Psychotherapy
CPTSD	Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
ICD-11	International Classification of Disease
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PCE	Positive Childhood Experience
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
WHO	World Health Organization

Who is she? She is a daughter. She is a wife, a mother, and she is a friend. She is a pocketful of light. She is a spark of something good, getting brighter, a dream grown large, the right thing at the right time.

Her spirit is the first thing people notice. Her mind always has a mind of its own. Her heart, though it has sometimes been hurt, her self-esteem may have been bruised, and she has suffered from trauma, she bears a strong resemblance to a daffodil: it always flowers again.

So, she wakes with anticipation. She finds new hills to climb. And, everyone agrees that the very fact of her in the world means there is still so much good to come.

Who is she? She is me. She is you.

I am her.

—M.H. Clark, adapted from *I am Her*

INTRODUCTION

This study examines intergenerational trauma, the transmission of childhood maltreatment experiences from one generation to another without conscious awareness of past trauma's impact on future generations. This type of trauma is transferred from parent to child and other family members, such as grandparents, siblings, aunts, or uncles.

According to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act,

the term child abuse and neglect means, at a minimum, any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.¹

The impact of this child abuse is far reaching. An early study on its effects, conducted in 1994 through a partnership between the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente, examined a participant group of “17,000 primarily white, middle and upper-middle-class college-educated individuals who resided in San Diego and belonged to the Kaiser Permanente health insurance program”² to determine how their exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) affected their long-term health. ACEs include

any of the following 10 categories of abuse, neglect, or loss prior to age 18: emotional abuse by a parent, physical abuse by a parent, sexual abuse by anyone, emotional neglect, physical neglect, loss of a parent, domestic violence, growing up with an alcohol and/or drug abuser in the household, living with a family

¹ Lisa Schelbe and Jennifer M. Geiger, *Intergenerational Transmission of Child Maltreatment*, (United Kingdom: Springer Cham, 2017), 2–3.

² “The Original ACE Study, The Expanded ACE Survey Prevalence of ACEs: National Human Trafficking Training and Techniques,” accessed February 3, 2023, https://nhttac.acf.hhs.gov/soar/eguide/stop/adverse_childhood_experiences.

member experiencing mental illness, and experiencing the incarceration of a household member. An ACE Score is derived by adding the number of ‘yes’ responses to these categories (0-10).³

This Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) study “found a direct link between childhood trauma and adult onset of chronic disease, depression, suicide, violence, victim violence, incarceration, and employment challenges.”⁴

A subsequent ACE study conducted by the RYSE Center in Philadelphia in 2015 “incorporated two additional layers, historical trauma and social location, on a person’s health outcome” and “expanded the research to examine ACEs among inner-city youth and the implications of intergenerational trauma.”⁵ This expanded Philadelphia ACEs study revealed that 83.2% of participants had at least one ACE, while the original CDC study indicated that 69.9% had at least one ACE. The higher the number of ACEs, the greater the incidence of adverse outcomes.

From a biblical perspective, the definition for intergenerational or generational trauma or curse is “an uncleansed iniquity that increases in strength from one generation to the next, affecting the members of that family and all who come into relationship with that family.”⁶ The book of Genesis provides a description of God’s creation of the earth and the first family: Adam and Eve. Genesis 1:28–30 describes God’s blessing for Adam and Eve and the charge that He placed over their lives.

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and

³ ACE Response, “Who We Are,” accessed February 1, 2023, http://www.aceresponse.org/who_we_are/FAQs_51_pg.htm.

⁴ “The Original ACE Study.”

⁵ “The Original ACE Study.”

⁶ Marilyn Hickey, *Breaking Generational Curses: Overcoming the Legacy of Sin in Your Life & Family* (Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: Harrison House Publishers, 2020), 18.

over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.”⁷

Adam and Eve lived an abundant life enjoying the fullness of God’s provision until Satan deceived them. Following the disobedience and fall of Adam and Eve, the curse of sin, death, and destruction entered the world. In Genesis 3:14–18, God declared a curse to the snake and man which started with judgments for what each one did. God’s speech to the woman described her fate.

According to Warren Wiersbe, in these passages, God declared the fate of the serpent and then on the devil who used the serpent.

God’s words to Satan are considered the first gospel, because this is the first announcement of the coming Redeemer found in the Bible. This was God’s declaration of war to Satan, climaxing in his condemnation (Romans 16:20).

The offspring described as ‘seed’ of the serpent and of the woman represents Satan’s family and God’s family. Throughout the ages, there has been a conflict between Satan and God, Satan’s children and God’s children. At the cross, Satan ‘bruised’ Christ’s heel, but because of His death and resurrection, Christ crushed Satan’s head and won a complete victory over him.

Now concerning Eve, it was the assurance that she was forgiven and she would bear children and immediately die. However, the privilege of woman as being the child bearer and ultimately the one who brings the Redeemer into the world would involve multiplied pain in pregnancy as well as submission to her husband.

To the man, Adam, he would have pain in his daily labor in the field. Adam would have to toil and sweat for food and be forever reminded of

⁷ Genesis 1:28–30, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NRSV.

his disobedience, of his ultimate death, and how his sin had affected creation.⁸

Marilyn Hickey, a global Bible teacher, writes “every undesirable, hereditary trait which seems to run in the family came from the sin of Adam and Eve. They are directly responsible for what is known today as the generational curse.”⁹ Additionally, Exodus 20:5–6 states, “You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generations of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.” This Old Testament scripture is highlighting the practice of idol worship, which was forbidden by God, and specifically addresses hereditary traits, iniquities, or weaknesses that are passed from generation to generation. The consequences of ancestral sins can be passed from generation to generation and innocent children suffer because of what their parents or grandparents have done.

Generational consequences are patterns of sinful behaviors that create spiritual scars and are transferred unconsciously onto others from the family of origin. Numerous religious scholars and Bible teachers, such as Derek Prince, Marilyn Hickey, Dr. Francis Myles, Carol and Jerry Robeson, and others, have documented examples of generational traits, traumas, or consequences including: lying, deceitfulness, gossip, cunning, addictions, jealousy, phobias, witchcraft, murder, cruelty, strife, envy, contention, hate, anger-rage, stubbornness, incest, child abuse, pornography, sexual perversions,

⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament*, Vol. 2. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, Publisher, 2008), 33-34.

⁹ Hickey, *Breaking Generational*, 18–19.

heaviness, unfaithfulness, poverty, infirmities, and many others. With each generation comes an opportunity for an abundant light-filled life. However, the transfer of sinful patterns from one generation to another brings about darkness and death.

The cycle of consequences flows from the rebellion of God's people. Ezekiel 18:20 states: "The person who sins shall die. A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child; the righteousness of the righteous shall be his own, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be his own." Likewise, Deuteronomy 24:16 indicates, "Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death." In these scriptures, God is stating parents and children are not responsible for the behavior of the other. Parents and children have a decision to make: either choose to adopt the same pattern of behavior as family or choose God's way of holiness. The generational consequences lived out by children are because of the choices they made. As revealed in Genesis 3:6, Eve took the fruit and ate, and she gave some to her husband. Adam did not have to follow the path of sin, which Eve had chosen. Nonetheless, he chose to disobey God.

In Galatians 3:10-14, the Apostle Paul emphasizes that salvation does not come by obedience to law because the law brings a curse, not a blessing. Law demands obedience in all things. The law exposes one's sinful behavior, as it operates as a mirror of condemnation. Christ is the ultimate seed, and the consequence of law is broken by Him. The blessing of Abraham is now the believer's by promise of the Spirit through faith. Christ defeated Satan's authority, and He is the fulfillment of the covenant God made with Abraham. Galatians 5:16 instructs us to "live by the Spirit, I say, and do not

gratify the desires of the flesh.” In Christ, we are to walk in the Spirit, choosing to invite the Spirit to override any desire to operate in the flesh, the old nature, and sinful family behaviors.

A believer who walks in faith and lives by the Spirit, similarly to Adam and Eve, will experience spiritual battles with Satan in our thought processes. As Paul writes in 2 Cor. 10:3-6, “Indeed we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human...and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.” We are to admonish every disobedient thought pattern by using our powerful God tools for breaking barriers, loose thoughts, emotions, and impulses to operate in the familiar behaviors passed down from generation to generation. Christians have the unique ability to make conscious decisions and be intentional with daily choices by exercising wisdom, for in our choices made, we are shaping our existence – to continue the unconscious cycle of generational consequences or breaking the chain.

In this thesis, I will begin with my journey and ministry context. I will share my truth related to generational trauma and demonstrate the importance of a personal relationship with God, understanding where God is in the suffering, and the divine purpose of pain. I will then examine in Chapter 2 a biblical foundation of childhood abuse by exploring the account of Joseph and specifically the impact of sibling rivalry on his life in Genesis 50:15–21. Next in Chapter 3, I will present a historical figure, Pandita Ramabai, as another example of God's providence and transformation from a life steeped in Hinduism, poverty, and a culture that demeaned women. In Chapter 4, I will review the theological foundation of forgiveness, explicitly addressing divine and interpersonal

forgiveness. In Chapter 5, I will provide a review of proven interdisciplinary psychological theories that address adult-childhood trauma and its implications.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I will describe the project implementation, presenting the content of each workshop in detail. I will analyze the resulting data to form a conclusion on the effectiveness of the workshops. I will also address changes I would make in future studies.

The hypothesis guiding this project is that if women eighteen years or older receive training regarding intergenerational abuse and its adverse effects, they will acquire the tools necessary to identify the generational trauma they may have suffered and to begin overcoming generational patterns through healing. Additionally, while exploring the theology of forgiveness and disciplines of prayer and scripture readings, I expect that the women may also begin to connect with God on a deeper level.

The project consisted of a series of virtual workshops held over six weeks that included individual prayer and devotion, reflection time, a lesson, and homework assignments. Each weekly workshop began with contemplative centering prayer. The first workshop provided a biblical account of intergenerational trauma. The second workshop reviewed a historical account of generational trauma with a specific emphasis on abuse from cultural and religious origins. Next, the third workshop defined intergenerational trauma, ACEs, and their impact on adult survivors. The fourth workshop explored the importance of Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) and discussed various cognitive treatment modalities. The fifth and sixth workshops investigated God's role in suffering and the importance of forgiveness.

Upon completing the six weekly training sessions, participants completed a survey evaluating their progress. These results demonstrated positive change in participants' awareness and understanding of trauma and in their application of spiritual disciplines and tools from psychology to develop greater emotional and spiritual health.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

My journey of faith is a story of becoming. It is a story of losses, hardship, strength, remarkable resilience, grace, forgiveness, hope, and tremendous love for the Lord and others. My account is about becoming the woman God intends me to be. It continually unfolds as my eyes, ears, and heart remain open to recognizing and embracing God as Abba Father, Jesus as Emmanuel (God with us), and the Holy Spirit as Advocate. God has been with me through all seasons of life, through the times of milk and honey and through my wanderings in the wilderness. God has molded me in each stage of life with his potter's hands into a person with purpose and value who can reach out to others, touch humanity with love, and be a vessel for kingdom building. Throughout my early Christian journey, God placed an intense urgency for me to show up ready to serve those individuals who may be marginalized.

In 2014, I founded and currently serve as president of Sassy Frassy, Inc. (hereafter, Sassy Frassy). This non-profit organization provides academic and life-skills enrichment programs for high-school-age girls in a rural county in Kentucky. The mission statement and vision of Sassy Frassy is for every girl in Kentucky to graduate from high school with a roadmap for college, vocational school, or job readiness skills to lead a productive life. Sassy Frassy is committed to ensuring girls at risk in urban and

Appalachian communities throughout Kentucky graduate from high school with a strategic five-year plan for success. To achieve this goal, Sassy Frassy partners with high schools, churches, and other non-profit organizations across Kentucky to enrich the lives of at-risk girls with life-skills development training, which includes academic goal setting, job readiness skills, community service opportunities, and educational scholarships for post-high school education. Sassy Frassy's overall program goal is to provide students with the knowledge and skills to succeed academically and professionally.

While this is a noble, healthy statement and vision, Sassy Frassy's current and former program participants reside in Kentucky, a state with a high incidence of childhood trauma. There is a strong emphasis in Sassy Frassy on academic achievement and post-high school education; however, the organization is less skilled at identifying trauma and recognizing the long-term impact on participants' spiritual, emotional, physical, and financial health.

According to the 2019 U.S. Department of Child and Human Services Children's Bureau's annual Child Maltreatment report, an estimated 656,000 children were abused or neglected victims nationwide—a rate of 8.9 victims per 1,000 children.¹ Most victims reported nationally were from three races: White (43.5%), Hispanic (23.5%), and African American (20.9%).² American Indian or Alaska Native children had the highest victimization rates at 14.8 per 1,000 children in the same race population. African-

¹ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, *Child Maltreatment 2019*. 2021, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>, xi.

² U.S. DOH, Children's Bureau, *Child Maltreatment*, 21

American children had the second-highest rate at 13.8 per 1,000 children of the same race.³ Kentucky was ranked the state with the greatest amount of child abuse, with 20,130 cases of child maltreatment in 2019,⁴ indicating a rate of 20.1 abused per 1,000 children.⁵ Kentucky victims per gender were 10,072 boys, a rate of 19.6, and 9,940 girls, a rate of 20.3 per 1,000 children.⁶ Per 1,000 children, the racial breakdown of Kentucky victims was reported as 21.9 African American, 13.3 Hispanic rate, 19.3 White, and 25.0 other races.⁷ The Child Maltreatment report identifies the person responsible for the abuse or neglect of a child as a perpetrator. Most perpetrators are a parent, and more than half are mothers to their victims.

My project will help women who have resided in or currently live in the state of Kentucky to determine if their lives have been affected by childhood trauma, gain knowledge of the impact of intergenerational abuse on adults, and acquire the tools necessary to begin identifying the trauma they may have suffered. By examining the biblical example of generational childhood abuse in the life of Joseph, the historical life journey of Pandita Ramabai, and the theological basis of forgiveness, I hope to provide a solid foundation for women to break the cycle of generational abuse and experience freedom from the impact of trauma in their lives.

³ U.S. DOH, Children's Bureau, *Child Maltreatment*, xi.

⁴ U.S. DOH, Children's Bureau, *Child Maltreatment*, 36.

⁵ U.S. DOH, Children's Bureau, *Child Maltreatment*, 37.

⁶ U.S. DOH, Children's Bureau, *Child Maltreatment*, 43.

⁷ U.S. DOH, Children's Bureau, *Child Maltreatment*, 44.

Context

History

In early 2003, Sassy Frassy was formed based upon my desire, as the founder, to honor the legacy of my brother, a professional artist who died at the age of 33 from HIV/AIDs complications. The initial goal was to provide academic scholarships for male performing arts students in rural areas of Kentucky who aspired to attend a college or university, experienced economic disadvantages, and demonstrated intellectual capabilities. Following the formative years of awarding an academic scholarship to young high school men, I modified the program objective and focus to address the needs of female high school students. I made the decision, as the founder and president, to form a non-profit organization whose mission would be aligned with my interest and passion for making a difference in the lives of women and girls by serving as a mentor, coach, life-skills advisor, and motivator, empowering others to lead positive and productive lives.

In 2014, the 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, Sassy Frassy, was formally structured. This agency partnered with a high school in Central Kentucky by providing a biweekly evidence-based life-skills program during the academic calendar year designed to motivate, engage, and assist high school girls in reaching their maximum potential. The program focuses on academics, career exploration and planning, personal development, and community service. Students also benefit from the program's attention to the whole girl. Sassy Frassy gives young women many opportunities to explore new experiences, master risks, and meet challenges that help them grow mentally, physically, psychologically, and socially.

Sassy Frassy is designed to serve girls whose family incomes are 133–200% of the poverty level (for example, in 2023, for a family of four, \$39,900–\$60,000).⁸ Each year in the fall semester, cohorts of high school students (tenth–twelfth grade) are invited to apply to be selected as participants. Female students are selected through an application and interview process conducted by the partnered high school’s Counseling Department and me.

Sassy Frassy is neither a remedial program nor a program targeted to girls identified as academically gifted or talented. Sassy Frassy’s participants typically have grade point averages of 3.0 or above, are interested in academics, have strong character, and have compassion for serving others in the community. Since its inception, Sassy Frassy has awarded over \$50,000 in scholarships.

Sassy Frassy’s evidence-based life skills program focuses on education and development areas such as:

- Academic goal setting and support
- Character value identification
- Personal assessment
- Short and long-term goal setting, and
- Civic and community involvement.

⁸ “Federal Poverty Levels/Guidelines & How They Determine Medicaid Eligibility,” American Council on Aging, accessed February 4, 2023, <https://www.medicaidplanningassistance.org/federal-poverty-guidelines/>.

Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

Although Sassy Frassy serves individuals in a state with high incidences of childhood maltreatment, the organization has not examined the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on students' likelihood to complete higher education, secure and maintain employment, develop practical interpersonal skills, and manage physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

The organization does not examine the effects of ACEs, such as promiscuity, homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, physical and emotional abuse, or health issues that may negatively impact a student's ability to execute a five-year roadmap post-high school graduation. The growth and effectiveness of Sassy Frassy will depend on its ability to expand the program initiatives to address the needs of women eighteen years and older who may have at least one ACE.

Sassy Frassy is poised in a strategic geographical location and partners with local schools and churches to have a significant impact. The optimal objective is to move from the traditional educational mentoring model to a transformative one in which women experience profound holistic change across all aspects of their lives. If women receive training regarding generational abuse and its adverse effects, they will acquire the tools necessary to begin identifying the generational trauma they may have suffered. With the right tools, once these women have recognized the trauma, they can work towards transformation. When transformed, individuals can serve as emotionally and spiritually healthy disciples in God's kingdom, significantly impacting the world.

Ministry Journey

Formative Years

As a young child, I resided in the state of Kentucky. My nuclear family included my father, mother, three brothers, and one sister. I am the second-born child and first daughter of my parent's union. Our family was poor as both parents were factory laborers, and only one parent completed high school. Additionally, the family dynamics were dysfunctional, as could be seen in my parents' relationships with their parents and siblings, fueled possibly by gaslighting, lying, smear campaigns, blaming, shaming, gossiping, ganging up (when one person was ostracized by the entire family), sibling rivalry, and jealousy. Our extended family interactions were often fraught with drama, chaos, conflict, lack of respect, and emotional, sexual, and physical abuse. Despite my parent's issues, I looked at family members differently and forged my extended family bonds at a young age. I have served in my birth family as the vital neutral mediator, speaking the truth to mend any divide.

As a young girl, my parents would drop my siblings and me off to attend weekly Sunday school and worship services at a Missionary Baptist church. However, my parents did not routinely attend church services. Instead, they would typically participate in special occasions and holiday services such as Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Christmas. Nonetheless, several adults who served as Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, choir directors, and deacons influenced my life and strengthened my desire to participate in the choir, Vacation Bible School, and the District Southern Baptist Sunday

School Convention. It was these foundational religious practices that were instrumental in the development of my core values and faith. I formed a rigid perspective of right and wrong in the Baptist church, always seeing black or white and no room for grey.

Spiritual Awakening

Growing up with church fellowship and an understanding of the importance of studying God's Word, I left for college and operated with the same practices. While in college, I was an active member of the University's Gospel Ensemble, a diverse group of Christians who would travel to sing gospel songs in churches throughout Kentucky. Through friendships formed in the University's Gospel Ensemble, I learned what it meant to have a spiritual connection with God by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

My experience with the University's Gospel Ensemble was life-changing. I met several Pentecostal believers in the choir with a solid personal relationship with the Lord, unlike any I had ever seen. This group of believers seemed to know God more profoundly, as their prayers seemed more authentic, complete with their prayer language and manifestation of spiritual gifts. Observing how God moved in these students' lives, I desired a deeper relationship with the Lord—one in which I, too, could experience the presence of God. I began studying the Trinity and gained an understanding of each role—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I learned and understood that the 'old man' is transformed when you accept Christ into your life and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. My transformation and renewal as a spirit-filled Christian occurred on my birthday in 1979 while attending a revival at a Pentecostal church in Louisville, Kentucky. This revival was my first experience with a Pentecostal worship service, which was quite different

from my Baptist upbringing. It included praise dancing, speaking in tongues, and laying on hands. During this revival service, I accepted the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and decided to submit my life to his direction and guidance.

Seeking More

Following college, I relocated to Cincinnati, Ohio, and joined a Southern Baptist Church. This experience was life-changing as I became active in the Young Adult Ministry (YAM) and was introduced to faith ministries led by Fred Price, Kenneth Copeland, Marilyn Hickey, and Kenneth Hagin. Members would frequently be rotated within the YAM, serving as the Bible study leader on various monthly topics. In YAM, I first led a Bible study and embraced God's call to serve in outreach ministry by visiting the sick and shut-in, nursing homes, and prisons, sharing the gospel and meeting other needs.

The YAM also introduced me to a structured spiritual discipline of praying through principles outlined in the book *Could You Not Tarry One Hour* by Dr. Larry Lea. As I grew in God's Word, I began stepping into my spiritual gifts and ministering to others. While serving at Southern Baptist, I understood I am made for more in God than what I had been living out.

Marriage and Relocations

Upon marrying in 1989, I relocated to Maryland. My father-in-law served as senior pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in the Northeast, so, as a member of Emmanuel, I was allowed to plan, lead, and present the Women's Conference and

HIV/AIDs Workshops. Additionally, I frequently served as a substitute speaker for Women's Day Celebrations and Women's Ministry Group when the senior pastor's wife (my mother-in-law) was unavailable. God used this situation to allow me to develop leadership and biblical teaching skills.

In 1999, I relocated back to Kentucky following my divorce. I immediately regretted the decision to return to Kentucky. As a result, I placed my house on the market countless times over fifteen years. Unfortunately, an interested buyer never materialized. Until 2015, I felt like I was in a place of darkness—no local church home, weekly flying nationwide for work, and no local friendships. Although my family of origin was ninety minutes away, they rarely visited. Initially, I would see my family several Sundays a month, but I decided to scale back when I observed the unhealthy relationship dynamics. The ugly behavior I once observed between my parents and their siblings and parents was now directed toward me. I know that God carried me through the darkness of the emotional hardship and difficulties of living in Kentucky. God allowed me to relocate to Kentucky to truly “see” my family. If I had remained in Maryland, I would not have experienced and recognized my parents’ and younger siblings’ core way of being. Also, I met my new spouse in this area, and we married in 2017.

Testimony

I am a management executive with over thirty years of expertise in the healthcare industry. Additionally, I have served in various leadership capacities on local and national levels for non-profit organizations, providing outreach services that address women's healthcare and wellness, economic awareness, college admissions, and financial

assistance needs. I am committed to making a difference in the lives of those in the beloved community, specifically supporting organizations that serve women and children by addressing education, economic, and health disparities.

I am especially passionate about supporting women and focusing on those who may be considered marginalized, voiceless, and invisible to the majority population. I am drawn to work with women who may have experienced trauma. Primarily, when I look at an abused woman, I see an individual that has been rejected. My heart aches for those as I understand their plight because I am her.

I experienced emotional abuse and neglect in my birth family, from name-calling, shaming, blaming, and belittling to silent treatment, parental favoritism, and sibling rivalry. The same behavior that my parents exhibited, such as withdrawal, cutoff way of being, and generational curses towards their foundational families, became my family of origin's pattern. I struggled with my complicated relationship with my mother. Mother initiated most of the mistreatment that I experienced, and my father's behavior (when with me) appeared to be complicit as he rarely spoke against mother's poor interactions. I frequently experienced my mother displaying favoritism towards my siblings, often withdrawing from communications with me and refusing to provide the emotional and financial support that was available for other siblings. I never understood the rationale for my mother's different way of being towards me; thus, I worked hard to excel academically, establish and maintain a successful career, and demonstrated strength through independence.

An early account of mistreatment, can be traced back to my childhood. While in the fifth grade, I was held responsible for preparing my younger siblings for first-grade

and kindergarten classes. My routine chores included housecleaning tasks such as changing bed linens, dusting, vacuuming, washing dishes, and folding clothes. I did not have to cook the evening meals, as my mother did so routinely. However, if I had fallen asleep and did not wash the dishes before going to bed, I would often receive a beating and be required to get up and complete the dish washing task. It is important to mention that my siblings (brothers) were only responsible for taking out the trash and rotated amongst themselves the task of mowing the lawn. My sister had no assigned chores. With these adult responsibilities, I had no time to spend with extracurricular school activities and my time socializing with other kids was limited.

Another illustration of mistreatment happened when I was preparing to leave for college following high-school graduation. I overheard my mother state to a childhood friend's mother that she did not want me to attend college; instead, she had hoped that I would become pregnant like the other teenagers in the neighborhood. It was heart-wrenching to hear that my mother desired a life for me as a teen laden with the emotional and financial hardship of caring for a child as an uneducated single teen mom. I was deeply saddened by this statement, as my mother was aware of the burden teen pregnancy places on the adolescent and the immediate family, since my mother had two younger sisters and four nieces who had experienced teen pregnancies.

A final example of mistreatment is when I was starting my freshmen year in college, my parents informed me they would not establish a biweekly allowance to assist with meals, personal goods, and school books. I recall my father stating, "you are the one that wants to go to college, not me." The previous year, an allowance had been established for my oldest brother who had enrolled in a two-year (associate) degree

program, and it was being continued during his final year. As a result, I secured the necessary student loans and worked part-time to cover the living and educational expenses, as my parents' income exceeded the threshold that would qualify me to receive financial aid.

I have wrestled with many "why" questions concerning my mother's loathing towards me and have stayed on an emotional roller coaster most of my adult life trying to understand "what was wrong" with me and attempting to prove that I was good enough to be loved. Although I have shared these situations of emotional abuse and neglect, I believe my parents had a love for me — not the love that I longed after, but a love out of obligation. My parents experienced their sufferings from generational trauma. There is an adage, 'Hurt people hurt people.' My mother and father were broken people who perhaps did the best they knew how based on their knowledge and circumstances. This testimony is my truth; it is not intended to malign anyone. My parents have their points of view that may differ from mine.

My parental relations have been challenging. However, the purpose of my parental relations was to bring me into this world. My parents owe me nothing; they have filled the call on their lives for me to get to this other side. My parents could have made another choice, but they decided to give birth to me. Without my parents, there would be no Sheila. I forgive my parents for the deliberate abuse shown towards me and am grateful to God for my journey.

In Psalm 139:13-14, David affirms that God had not only created him, but he had knit (him) together. I, too, am a work of art that God put together by hand. I have been wondrously made. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding my childhood, my

existence is intentional. I am not a mistake, for God makes no mistakes. I am created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) with purpose and meaning.

In 2 Samuel 7:15a, God was speaking to David concerning his son Samuel and promised: “But I will not take my steadfast love from him...” God makes this same promise to me, and I rest in knowing that no matter what trauma may have the potential to shake or shift my life, God’s love will always be present in my life. Generational trauma is penultimate; meaning it is second to last. God’s love for me is last and most significant.

As an adult, I now understand God’s purpose for my familial relations, for it is in the suffering that God has used me to minister and provide pastoral care to others. With this knowledge I am committed to building my hope on the steadfast love of God in my life.

Call to Ministry

My life choices were not strategic, but they have allowed me to experience education, live out a professional leadership roadmap, and develop spiritually through active church involvement and community service. The Lord has shown favor over my life; I desire to fulfill the responsibility outlined in Luke 12:48, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be expected.”

The challenges I experienced while attempting to establish a loving and supportive mother-daughter relationship have shaped my vision to serve as a counselor to women who may be impacted by intergenerational trauma. While serving in this capacity,

I anticipate witnessing God's unconditional love, acceptance, forgiveness, and grace. My ministry has been shaped through the servant leadership model within the non-profit organization Sassy Frassy whose mission is to serve marginalized individuals. I want to be a living example of St. Teresa of Avila's belief that we are Christ's hands, which he uses to bless people now.⁹

The urgency to live out this calling is *now*—because far too many women and children suffer from generational abuse. I hope to equip individuals with the proper tools to understand generational trauma, identify their family of origin pattern, and grasp the importance of forgiveness, which may lead to a deeper emotional wellbeing and spiritual relationship with God. Seeing Jesus is what Christianity is all about. In its purest form, Christian service means imitating Him whom we see. I aim to use the gifts of leadership, evangelism, teaching, and helping that God has given me to serve those through pastoral care and counseling.

Synthesis

As Sassy Frassy's president, I must continue to lead the participants with core values of integrity, respect, compassion, and trust. Also, having experienced childhood abuse, I must live out my calling to break the cycle of generational trauma by educating and empowering women to identify behaviors that contribute to abuse and understand the generational cycle and iniquity of sin and by encouraging victims to seek professional help and adopt spiritual practices of prayer, silence, and forgiveness to grow and mature as a disciple of Christ. Also, I must be authentic by sharing personal stories to include

⁹ Caroline Myss, “*Entering the Castle: An Inner Path to God and Your Soul*,” (New York, NY: Free Press, 2017), 65.

steps to demonstrate healing and how God carried me through the sufferings and equipped my life with solid faith and resiliency.

My project is based on profound faith and my aspiration to prepare women with tools to identify if they experienced childhood abuse, become self-aware, spiritually strengthened, and enhance their interpersonal skills. I will examine childhood trauma and neglect experienced by women and its implications on spiritual, physical, and emotional health outcomes. Pure emotional neglect (abuse) is invisible.

The main concepts I plan to teach begin with understanding the biblical and historical accounts of generational abuse. We will examine the theological basis of forgiveness, understanding where God is in the suffering, and explore interdisciplinary theories to treat adult survivors of childhood abuse, as well as the significance of Positive Childhood Experiences. At the end of the project, I hope women will be committed to applying the learnings, tools, and spiritual practices to break generational trauma in their families and to surrender their pain and suffering to God's use.

Conclusion

A critical missional objective of Sassy Frassy is to make a difference in the lives of girls. This objective is being met by effectively collaborating with schools to offer a life-skills enrichment program and scholarships. Prior to this point, the non-profit has not provided education on family dynamics, genograms to identify systemic generational behaviors that may impede a young adult from creating a successful post-high school education and career. The impact of intergenerational childhood trauma is lifelong. However, with a foundational knowledge of familial patterns, appropriate cognitive tools,

and relevant spiritual disciplines, such as prayer and forgiveness, individuals can break the generational consequences. As the organization's founder and president, I envision expanding the target audience from high school students to women 18+ years, modifying current program offerings to include seminars that address breaking the cycle of generational trauma through collaborations with area churches and non-profit organizations specifically for women. Through a deliberate pursuit of God, adult survivors of trauma can gain an understanding of their suffering and the purpose of their pain to live out the calling that God has ordained.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

An Exegesis of Genesis 50:15–21

Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" So, they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So, have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Genesis chapters thirty-seven to fifty are devoted to Jacob. The primary focus of these chapters is Jacob's eleventh son, Joseph. Thus, this section is considered the *story* of Joseph. Specifically, the theme verse of the passage, Genesis 50:20, describes how God transforms the evil of Joseph's brothers into something that saves the lives of people from many nations.

The events in Genesis 50:15–21 occur following the death and burial of Jacob and before the great exodus from Egypt. Joseph leads a caravan of his family and the Pharaoh's servants to the cave at Machpelah on a piece of land that Abraham purchased,

and he buries his father Jacob there. Commentators explain that, “On their return to Egypt, the brothers, afraid of Joseph without the protection of their father, seek to preserve their lives by deceiving Joseph with a false request from Jacob.”¹ When the funeral services had ended and the family returned to their day-to-day activities, the reality of their father’s passing dawned on the brothers. At that moment, the brothers were afraid that Joseph would seek revenge and cause harm to them as they had done to him as a boy.

The central theme of Genesis 50:15–21 is forgiveness and God’s providence. Divine providence and resilience are essential aspects of my journey with God. The Old Testament passages for this chapter explore God’s silent movement upon the life of Joseph through his endurance of childhood trauma that included rejection, pain, separation from family, and false imprisonment.

The story of Joseph teaches us a great deal about personal trauma, resilience, forgiveness, and the sovereignty of God. This chapter will follow the exegetical process to determine this text’s central message and identify several key theological themes in the text. These passages from Genesis reveal that divine providence and forgiveness are available to all of God’s children, not simply a select few.

Background to Genesis

Genesis 50 is located in the first of five books that comprise what is called the Pentateuch in Christian tradition and the Torah in Jewish tradition. God’s sovereignty is

¹ Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page, Jr., and Matthew J. M. Coomber, *The Old Testament and Apocrypha Fortress Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 131.

emphasized in the Pentateuch. Genesis consists of two parts: Genesis 1–11 presents a narrative of the creation of the world, humanity, and early world events, often called the primeval story, which divides the primeval age into periods before and after the flood. As the *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary* explains, these “stories are properly termed ‘myths,’ that is, sacred narratives that relate how the world and man came into their present form.”² Genesis 12–50, a narrative of the first four generations of the Israelite ancestors, is separated into three sections: the lineage of Abraham from Terah; Jacob from Isaac and Joseph and his brothers from Jacob; and genealogical interludes devoted to Ishmael and Esau.

The book of Genesis does not identify its author. It has been traditionally assumed that Genesis contained the writings of Moses. However,

many scholars since the nineteenth century have denied Moses’ authorship of Genesis. Instead, scholars have evolved new critical theories that the Pentateuch had been compiled from separate sources known as source criticism. This theory is known as the “Documentary Hypothesis,” and its protagonist was Julius Wellhausen.³

According to this theory, anonymous editors composed the Pentateuch with four critical components, identified by tracing divine names, such as Elohim and Yahweh, through the Pentateuch and by tracing certain variations in phraseology and word choice. The four sources are called the J source, which uses Yahweh for God; the E source, which uses Elohim for God; the P or priestly source; and the D or Deuteronomic source. Genesis includes three of the four sources: J, E, and P. Scholars continue to challenge this dissection of the Pentateuch, and no real consensus has been established.

² Mark Allen Powell, *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011), n.p.

³ Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 44.

Primary themes of Genesis 1–11 describe the relationship between God and the world, including the goodness of creation, sin, and judgment. In Genesis 12–50, the primary theme is the work of God in establishing Israel as a family among all the families of the earth. This theme is recorded through God’s promises and covenant with Abraham and confirmed with Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph and connects these two sections of Genesis. Another connection is “the prevailing goodness of creation, signaled at the outset by God’s affirmation in Genesis 1:31 and at the conclusion by Joseph’s affirmation of the providence of God in Genesis 50:20.”⁴

Context

Historical-Cultural Context of Genesis 50:15–21

Not only did Egypt play a significant role in the lives of Abraham and his descendants, but it also “played an important role in the development of the Torah, as seen in the stories of Abram and Sarai (Gen. 12), Joseph (Gen. 37–50), and throughout the entire exodus narrative, interwoven into many areas of the Old Testament.”⁵ Scholars have indicated that it is impossible to determine the precise dates that Israel’s patriarchs (including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) may have lived. However, they may be placed in the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1550 BC) based on events described as follows:

Early in the Middle Bronze Age, the Amorites ruled Mesopotamia from several strong city-states in an uncertain balance of power. During this period, Egypt also succumbed to the rise of Semites. At this time, the native Egyptian rule in the country ended when the Hyksos, Semites probably from Syria-Palestine, took

⁴ Watson E. Mills and Roger Aubrey Bullard, *Merger Dictionary of the Bible* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991), 320–321.

⁵ Yee, Page, and Coomber, *The Old Testament*, 13.

control.

The events of Genesis 12–50 fit well in the Middle Bronze Age based on the available archaeological, cultural, and literary evidence. The Hyksos rule of Egypt (1700-1550 BC) may have been the time when the children of Israel lived in Egypt and multiplied so rapidly. Once the Hyksos were expelled, a “new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt” (Exodus 1:8).⁶

Family Unit

The ancient Israelite (or ancestral family) household was quite different from the contemporary understanding of family. Throughout ancient Israel, three types of family structure existed. The smallest was considered the nuclear family, comprised of the parents, their children, and any slaves that the family could afford. Larger was the extended family, and beyond this was the multiple-family household. According to the

Mercer Dictionary,

several families living in proximity together, whether in a village or a section of a larger settlement, could constitute a *mispaha* or *clan*. At the next higher level of society was the tribe comprised of clans in a more extensive land area; and wider than this was the nation or league of tribes.⁷

The traditional household was the basic building block of the tribal structure, ruled by the father’s authority. It was considered an agrarian unit because it depended for its survival on possession of a plot of land for growing crops and grazing land for raising livestock. The typical household would have included: grandparents, the families of grown children, an adopted child or adopted children, a divorced adult daughter who had returned to the paternal homestead, male and female servants or slaves, and other

⁶ Arnold and Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament*, 23–25.

⁷ Mills and Bullard, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 294–295.

dependents.⁸

An example of the tribal family structure is that of the twelve tribes of Israel. Unlike today, there was no practice in early Israelite culture for a personal religion. A person's religious way of being was in direct alignment to the deity served by the patriarch of the family tribe. God is a generational God who establishes and focuses on relations through genealogical origins.

It is important to note in ancient Israel, individual belief systems were nonexistent, instead a person's relationship to God was as a function of God's relationship with the person's family. As stated throughout Genesis, the ancestral narratives use the language of family in reference to God. Jacob invokes the God of his lineage: the God of Abraham and of Isaac (Gen. 31:5, 42, 53; 32:9; 46:1–2).⁹

Children & Birthright

Israelites highly valued children as gracious gifts of God (Psalm 113:9; 127:3; 128:5–6). Having large numbers of children was considered a divine blessing, and the multiplication of descendants was part of God's promise to Israel's ancestors. As the *Harper Collins Dictionary* explains, "An inability to conceive was considered at best a vexation (Gen. 16:2; 30:2) and at worst a divine punishment (Gen. 20:18)."¹⁰ Carol Meyers' research discloses:

infant mortality rates were high as well as the risk of deaths for women during pregnancies in ancient Israel. It is likely that early Israelite farm families rarely

⁸ Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Family in First Temple Israel," in *Families in Ancient Israel*, eds. Leo G. Perdue et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 50–52.

⁹ Carol Meyers, "The Family in Early Israel," in *Families in Ancient Israel*, eds. Leo G. Perdue et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 39.

¹⁰ Powell, *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*, 128.

reached the typical size, for example, of nineteenth-century American farm families, which had five or six surviving children (out of seven or eight births).¹¹

Philippe Aries proposed that the discovery of childhood as a distinct phase of life is a relatively recent event. He argued that, for most recorded history in most cultures, small children—minors—were practically invisible. Where they appear in literature and image, they are represented as scaled-down adults; in our western culture, not until the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century did boys emerge as the first specialized children.¹²

According to Joseph Blenkinsopp,

No provision was made for the legal protection of minors. As a result, the laws and norms that speak of children generally refer to young adults, and the same is true of most of the admonitions regarding intergenerational, familial relations in the proverbial literature. Most of the legal stipulations, norms, and admonitions dealing with children in the Hebrew scriptures are concerned with young adults who are still members of the paternal household and therefore under the jurisdiction of the paterfamilias.¹³

Regarding birthrights, throughout ancient Israel the eldest son was commonly given preferential treatment, including a double share of the inheritance. However, many patriarchs disregarded this practice by selecting a younger son rather than the eldest son. For example, Abraham chose to bless Isaac instead of Ishmael, Isaac blessed Jacob and not Esau, and Jacob blessed Joseph instead of Reuben, who lost his birthright because of a severe offense (Gen. 35:22; 49:3–4).

¹¹ Meyers, “Family in Early Israel,” 28.

¹² Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1962), 58.

¹³ Blenkinsopp, “Family in First Temple Israel,” 66–67.

Unit Limitations

Meyers writes that the subordination of adult children to older adults, including the subordination of adult children to parents or younger siblings to the eldest adult brother, would create conflict within the household. Generational or intergenerational conflict and violence were most likely to affect male members of early Israelite families, as daughters often left the family unit through marriage. Additionally, households with too many sons surviving into adulthood could experience interhousehold struggles over property rights, especially as households sought to expand their holdings.¹⁴

Literary Context

The Joseph story is the longest of the patriarchal stories (Gen. 12–36). The narrative unity of Genesis 37–50, except for Chapter 38, distinguishes it from the episodic nature of the other patriarchal traditions. Additionally, the absence of the pattern call, promise, and revelation differentiates this narrative.

Some scholars consider Genesis 37–50 to be a part of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. Gerhard von Rad, a biblical scholar, suggests that the development of Joseph’s character is consonant with some of the didactic writings in wisdom literature, such as Proverbs and Job.¹⁵ The story of Joseph is the only story in the Book of Genesis that can be labeled as a novella, Scullion and Freedman state, “A shorter prose narrative

¹⁴ Meyers, “Family in Early Israel,” 35.

¹⁵ Mills and Bullard, *Merger Dictionary of the Bible*, 468.

which tells an unusual, though quite credible, happening; it is brief and eschews prolixity.”¹⁶

Detailed Analysis of Text: Genesis 50:15–21

In interpreting this pericope, it is imperative to understand the family history of Jacob, his birth family, division, Jacob’s marital family and structure, and the generational curses and behavior that infected his offspring. Joseph’s story becomes a primary focus of his father’s (Jacob) account in Genesis. Jacob’s family was large, with two wives (Leah and Rachel), who were sisters and rivals, two concubines (Zilpah and Bilhah), and twelve sons. Jacob’s household was characterized by dysfunction and strife.

Figure 1 shows the family of Jacob, his wives and concubines, and their offspring.

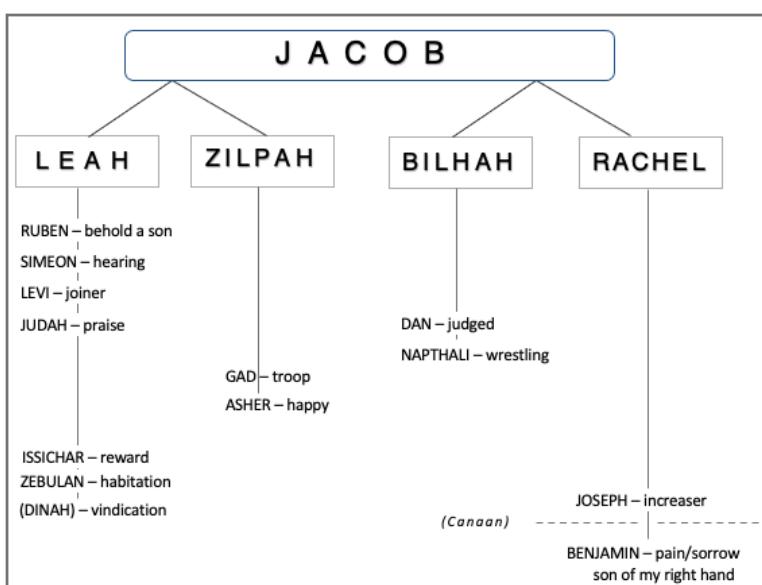


Figure 1. Jacob’s family, including wives, concubines, and offspring.

Jacob was familiar with division in a family household, as he stole his brother’s Esau birthright of the firstborn blessing (Gen. 27:19–29). During his years with Laban,

¹⁶ John J. Scullion and David Noel Freedman, “Genesis, the Narrative of: Literary Forms in Genesis,” *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 68.

the father of his wives, Leah, and Rachel (Gen. 29:30), Jacob initially worked for seven years as payment for Rachel, the younger daughter, to take her as his wife. Once the seven years were completed, Laban chose not to give Rachel away in marriage first and instead required Jacob to marry his oldest daughter, Leah. Jacob desired Rachel as his wife, and to have her, he had to work another seven years for Laban. Jacob carried this generational curse of sibling rivalry into his own established family.

Genesis 37 introduces Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob: “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age” (Gen. 37:3). Joseph was the first son of Jacob’s favorite wife, Rachel, and he was loved and favored by his father. Joseph was a naïve and guileless boy. He and his brother Benjamin are the second family, spoiled and treated favorably. Victor Hamilton argues that Jacob’s love for Joseph is doting. He was aware of the potential for friction in a family where parental favoritism was blatant. Jacob personally knew the schism that results from such tactics. Nevertheless, he proceeded to extend preferential concern for Joseph.¹⁷

Despite what Jacob experienced, he still singled out Joseph and treated him as special by giving him a colorful coat. As a result, Joseph’s brothers “hated him and could not speak peaceably to him” (Gen. 37:4). Gerhard von Rad explains:

The coat given to Joseph was a distinguished garment from the usual dress coats by its length, and the length of its sleeves; it was a luxury which only those who did not have to work could think of having.¹⁸

¹⁷ Victor P. Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis—Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 407.

¹⁸ Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1963), 346.

This generous gift sent a message to the family that Joseph had been chosen to be his heir, as Reuben had lost his birthright privilege due to his grave sin.

Joseph had dreams and spoke of these (Gen. 37:5–11) to his brothers and father, who failed to grasp their significance. Joseph’s sharing of his dreams caused his brothers to hate him even more and envy him. Genesis 37:10–11 describes Jacob’s negative response to Joseph: “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers come to bow down to the earth before you?” Von Rad comments, “The brothers’ reaction to the dreams was negative; the father is completely negative. It was not a rejection of a direct, divine prophecy, but rather the instinctive reaction against an unpleasant and unbelievable picture of the future from the mouth of a youth.”¹⁹

Proverbs 10:12 states, “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.” This was the case for Joseph’s brothers, for as their hatred towards him grew, they plotted to kill Joseph. Ultimately, they sold him into slavery instead of killing him. They “pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And, they took Joseph to Egypt” (Gen. 37:28). Joseph’s older brothers took his robe, slaughtered a male goat, and dipped the robe in its blood (37:31). They presented the robe to their father, Jacob (37:32). The irony in this action is that Jacob had used goat skins to deceive his brother years before; now, Jacob is deceived by animal evidence. Jacob’s shady character had been transferred to his sons.

The story of Joseph and his brothers portrays flawed characters who struggle to prevent jealousy and evil from disrupting the unity of the family. The presence of Joseph in the home did not create problems so much as it revealed them.

¹⁹Von Rad, *Genesis*, 347.

The context of Genesis 39–49 can be outlined as follows:

1. Genesis 39	Joseph a slave in Egypt
2. Genesis 40–41	Joseph interpreting dreams & rise to power
3. Genesis 42–44	Joseph's brothers' journey to Egypt/return to Canaan
4. Genesis 45	Joseph reveals himself
5. Genesis 46–47	Jacob and family settle in Egypt
6. Genesis 48	Jacob blesses Joseph & grandsons
7. Genesis 49	Jacob's last words to his sons

Text Unit

The events of Genesis 50:15–21 are a critical part of the Joseph story. This text follows the death of Jacob, the official mourning, and the funeral procession to Canaan to bury the patriarch, as described in Genesis 50:1–14. Genesis 50:15–21 is a recapitulation of Joseph's story denouement; the focus is on Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers, the affirmation of God's providence throughout Joseph's life, and the greater good for the children of Israel to survive the famine. The chapter concludes with the third subject, described in Genesis 50:22–26, of Joseph's death and Joseph remembering the promises made to his forefathers: "God will certainly come to your aid and bring you up from this land to the land he swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Gen. 50:24). Joseph made his brothers promise to carry his bones to the promised land (Gen. 50:25), which, years later, the Israelites did (Exod. 13:19; Josh. 24:32).

Comparative English Versions

The four different translations of Genesis 50:15–21 (see Table 1) hold some

significant differences in the text as identified in the *New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* and the *Hebrew Bible*. In verse 15, the *NRSV* uses the word “realizing,” whereas, the other three versions use “when,” “after,” or “and.” In the context of verse 15, “the Hebrew definition of *realizing* means to see; understand; spy; reveal; look at; examine; inspect; show.”²⁰

In verse 16, the *NRSV* uses the word “approached,” and the *Hebrew Bible* uses “charged.” The term approached, as the Hebrew dictionary defines the word, suggests the brothers are “shouting, crying out.”²¹ As defined by the *Hebrew Bible with Commentary Translation*, the verb “charged” instead “refers either to giving instructions or delivering the terms of the last will.”²² In verse 17, the *NRSV* and *Hebrew Bible* utilize the term “crime” where the other versions have “trespass of their sins” and “transgression of their sin.” “Crime,” in this context, per the *Hebrew Bible Dictionary*, is considered “an offense concerning property; wantonness.”²³

The most significant difference was found in verse 18, in which the *NRSV* states, “brothers wept and fell down.” The other versions do not mention the brothers weeping, only that they “bowed” down or “flung” themselves. The final significant difference is in the 20th verse. The *NRSV* uses the term “harm,” and the other versions consistently prefer “evil.”

²⁰ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), n.p.

²¹ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages*. n.p.

²² Robert Adler, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 201.

²³ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages*. n.p.

Table 1. Comparison of Joseph's Forgiveness in Genesis 50 Across Four Versions

New King James Version (NKJV)	The New Oxford Annotated Bible – New Revised Standard Version	Christian Standard Bible	The Hebrew Bible
¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."	¹⁵ Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong we did to him?"	¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said to one another "If Joseph is holding a grudge against us, he will certainly, repay us for all the suffering we caused him."	¹⁵ And Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, and they said, "If Joseph bears resentment against us, he will surely pay us back for all the evil we caused him."
¹⁶ So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "before your father died, he commanded, saying,	¹⁶ So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died,	¹⁶ So they sent this message to Joseph, "before he died, your father gave a command.	¹⁶ And they charged Joseph, saying, "Your father left a charge before his death, saying,
¹⁷ 'Thus, you shall say to Joseph: 'I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.	¹⁷ Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you. Now, therefore, please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him.	¹⁷ 'Say this to Joseph: Please forgive your brothers' transgression and their sin – the suffering they caused you.' Therefore, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when their message came to him.	¹⁷ 'Thus shall you say to Joseph: We beseech you, forgive, pray, the crime and the offense of your brothers, for the evil they have caused you.' And so now, forgive, pray, the crime of the servants of your father's God." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.
¹⁸ Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."	¹⁸ Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves."	¹⁸ His brothers also came to him, bowed down before him, and said, "We are your slaves!"	¹⁸ And his brothers then came and flung themselves before him and said, "Here we are, your slaves."
¹⁹ Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?"	¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God?"	¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God?"	¹⁹ And Joseph said, "Fear not, for am I instead of God?"
²⁰ But as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.	²⁰ Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good in order to preserve numerous people, as he is doing today.	²⁰ You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people.	²⁰ While you meant evil toward me, God meant it for good so as to bring about at this very time keeping many people alive.
²¹ Now, therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.	²¹ So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way, he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.	²¹ Therefore do not be afraid. I will take care of you and your children." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.	²¹ And so fear not. I will sustain you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke to their hearts.

Interpretation of Text – Genesis 50:15-21

Text Structural Outline: Genesis 50:15–21

The phases of interaction between Joseph and his brothers in the seven verses concerning forgiveness examined here were as follows:

- I. Alarm v. 15
- II. Appeal vv. 16–18
- III. Assurance vv. 19–21

I. Alarm: Genesis 50:15

Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph’s brothers said, “What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong we did to him?”

This account follows the mourning of Jacob’s death, the travel to Canaan to bury Jacob, and the return to Egypt—to the brothers’ daily lives as shepherds and Joseph as a ruler in the household of Pharaoh. The brothers did not suddenly become aware of the full meaning of their father’s death. Instead, the impact of Jacob’s passing dawned upon them gradually, and they became less and less confident about their future after their father passed.

Is it possible that, at this juncture, the brothers reflected on the first time they met Joseph in Egypt when he appeared ruthless, cunning, and accused them of being spies? At that time, “Joseph also remembered the dreams that he had dreamed about them. He

said to them; you are spies; you have come to see the land's nakedness! . . . And he put them all together in prison for three days" (Gen. 42:9,17).

The brothers may also have been recalling the moment when Joseph picked out Simeon and had him bound before their eyes (Gen. 42:24) and the time he commanded the steward to put the silver cup in the top of the sack of the youngest brother (Gen. 44:1–3). Von Rad states that Joseph was testing his siblings to reveal their character, to discipline the brothers severely, and to chasten them.²⁴

It was evident that Joseph was markedly relieved after learning his father Jacob was still alive, and he had revealed his identity to his brothers (Gen. 45:1–8). The brothers may have believed that Joseph was kind and generous towards them because of the love he had for Jacob, their father, and that after the passing of Jacob, the relationship would change. Initially triggered by seeing his brothers, Joseph became angry and desired revenge. He changed his approach toward his brothers after learning that his father and brother, Benjamin, were alive. It was then that he fully realized and understood the path of his life-purpose and how the dreams of his youth were being fulfilled.

This passage (50:15) is the first time Joseph's brothers acknowledged the wrong they did to him. The brothers appear to be full of guilt over their unjust acts even though Joseph had previously expressed to "his brothers not to be distressed, or angry with themselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life . . . so it was not you who sent me here, but God" (45:1–9). It was then that Joseph expressed his desire to be reconciled with his brothers. However, his brothers never asked for forgiveness.

²⁴ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 378.

The brothers feared Joseph and did not trust how he might respond to their treachery against him when he was a child. After all Joseph had done to encourage his brothers, it was cruel for them to think Joseph had a grudge and would pay it back in full. This way of thinking indicates how we may suspect or project onto others what we would do ourselves if we had the opportunity. Walter Brueggemann writes:

the enduring power of guilt and its resultant fear is something every family knows. Like every family, these brothers know that the only one who can break the cycle and banish the guilt is the wronged party, the one whom they most fear.²⁵

II. Appeal: Genesis 50:16–18

And they charged Joseph, saying, “Your father left a charge before his death, saying, ‘Thus shall you say to Joseph: We beseech you, forgive, pray, the crime and the offense of your brothers, for evil they have caused you. And so now, forgive, pray, the crime of the servants of your father’s God.’” And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. And his brothers then came and flung themselves before him and said, “Here we are, your slaves.”²⁶

Robert Adler, a biblical scholar, indicates that, in this text, the brothers are attempting to convey to Joseph the terms of what they believe is their father’s “charge” before his death.²⁷ Rather than face Joseph directly, the brothers send a message through an intermediary. Scholars are uncertain if Jacob spoke the words quoted by the brothers. If Jacob had wanted to intercede for the guilty sons or if he was aware of the mistreatment his sons caused Joseph, he had ample opportunity to discuss this with Joseph during times when they were alone.

²⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation—A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1973), 370.

²⁶ Genesis 50:16–18, Hebrew Bible.

²⁷ Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible, Vol. 1: The Five Books of Moses Torah. A Translation with Commentary*. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019), 201.

The brothers' approach of writing letters and sending messages, rather than facing their brother directly, was a way to avoid confrontation with their adversary (Joseph). The brothers' behavior was learned as they witnessed their father, Jacob, sending messengers to his brother Esau (Gen. 32:3–5). Like Jacob with Esau, Joseph's brothers were highly apprehensive about meeting him in person.

This message the brothers sent to Joseph does not address their heartfelt desire for forgiveness; it speaks more about the unchanged character of the brothers to continue to operate with deception. The brothers feel guilty about their past behavior toward Joseph. However, Pirson writes, "The brothers' last words also reveal something else: they do not share Joseph's view of God having turned evil into good—a notion that is not until here present in Genesis. Joseph wept when they spoke to him (Gen. 50:17)."²⁸ Based on the instruction the brothers said had come from their father, Jacob, it indicates he also did not share Joseph's view that God's hand was involved. Pirson argues,

A possible reason Jacob and the brothers do not share Joseph's view can be found in the stories related in the book of Genesis in which Jacob's ancestors play a part. In several stories, Yahweh punishes people who commit evil deeds; Genesis 6:5 states that God saw the wickedness of humankind. Therefore, humankind is swept away by the flood. Alternatively, Genesis 18:20, where Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed by Sulphur and fire from heaven. These examples serve to illustrate that the notion of God turning evil into good is not yet present in Genesis.²⁹

Joseph wept again as he revealed his identity to his brothers, tried to calm their fears, and testified to God's involvement in his experiences over the prior years. Hamilton writes that this verse is a sequel to the event described in Genesis 45:1–15.

²⁸ Ron Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams: A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37–50* (New York, NY: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 136.

²⁹ Pirson, *Lord of the Dreams*, 136.

²⁸ Hamilton, *The New International Commentary*, 704.

According to him, “It is as though the whole ordeal has been in vain: if they have learned anything about him beyond externals, and the fear may well have haunted them all those years, the effect has evaporated. Hence, Joseph’s tears.”²⁸

It appears that, in Genesis 50:18, Joseph must have summoned his brothers to his home after receiving their message; based upon the guilt and fear they held onto, it is unlikely the brothers initiated an unannounced visit. When they arrived, they fell and lay stretched out on the ground before Joseph. The brothers offered to become servants and work their way to Joseph forgiving and accepting them.

This act fulfilled Joseph’s prophetic dreams (Gen. 37:7–11). Brueggemann suggests,

There is a weaving together of “accidents” and “fortuitous” events that are not the doing of the father or the brothers or even Joseph. There is something dark and deep going on in the story that shapes it despite all the actors. The brothers are so preoccupied with their guilt and betrayal that they are unaware of the larger agenda of the dream. Guilt operates for them only because the dream is not fully embraced or trusted.”³⁰

This dream fulfillment in Genesis 50:18 leads us to the response of Joseph.

III. Assurance: Genesis 50:19–21

And Joseph said, “Fear not, for am I instead of God? While you meant evil toward me, God meant it for good, so as to bring about at this very time keeping many people alive. And so, fear not. I will sustain you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke to their hearts. (Hebrew Bible)

Nowhere in Genesis 50:19 does Joseph state “I forgive you,” as the brothers had requested. Joseph had already forgiven his brothers several years ago, as evident in the emotional display of Genesis 45:1–15, and specifically in v.15: “And he kissed all his

³⁰ Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 371.

brothers and wept upon them; and after that, his brothers talked with him.” Joseph is not interested in revisiting the past nor in rebuking the brothers for asking for reconciliation; it is here that Joseph attempts to calm their fears and responds to his brothers with a question: “Am I in the place of God?” (Gen. 50:19). In *Genesis as Dialogue*, author Brodie implies that Joseph’s question is a reminder that in various ways God has been with Joseph; Joseph has been a form of divine presence.³¹

Similar reproachful language occurred with Joseph’s father Jacob’s remarks to his wife, Rachel, when she saw that she bore Jacob no children. In Genesis 30:2, Jacob asks Rachel, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”³². Victor Hamilton argues that there are two differences between Joseph’s question and the one Jacob addressed to family members. The first is in the Greek translation of Genesis 50:19: “For I am God’s. You need have no fear of retribution, for I have God’s view of things, and am, therefore, above retaliation.” Secondly,

Jacob qualifies his question: “Am I in God’s place? Who has restrained you from having children? Am I God?” asks Jacob, “who has the power to close and open your womb?” However, Joseph leaves his question dangling. It could have been extended to say, “Am I in God’s place to impose retribution? Vengeance is Yahweh’s. He will repay if necessary.” In this statement, Joseph will only be God’s instrument, not his substitute.”³³

Joseph did not play down their childhood treachery and wrongful acts, for he acknowledged they “intended to do harm to me” (Gen. 50:20). Joseph knew that in his brothers’ hearts there had been evil, hatred, and jealousy towards him. In contrast, Joseph proved to have a strong and resilient faith. He lived apart from his family for many years,

³¹ Thomas, L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, & Theological Commentary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 89.

³² Genesis 30:2, NRSV.

³³ Hamilton, *The New International Commentary*, 705.

and a false religion in Egypt surrounded him. Joseph was a person of strong faith; scriptures do not report anyone in Egypt who encouraged his faith. His brothers had oppressed him, the Lord had caused him to experience severe trials, and the people he helped forgot about him in his hour of need. However, Joseph's faith, though tested, did not falter. He clung to God's promises and his dreams.

Joseph knew that God had overruled the evil acts of his brothers to accomplish His good purpose. In Genesis 45:7–8, Joseph first testified that God sent him ahead to Egypt to preserve a remnant among Jacob's descendants. The brothers were so concerned with their evil plot to take Joseph out that they were not aware of another plan, a divine plan orchestrated by a hidden God.

In contrast to the brothers' evil actions, God moved on Joseph's behalf as reflected in the Psalm tradition of Old Testament faith. These prayers show the conviction that it is enough to trust the plan of God to refute the deathly plans of others:³⁴

- “Let them be put to shame and dishonor who *seek after* my life” (Ps. 35:4).
- “They plot mischief while on their beds; they are set on a way that is not good; they do not reject evil” (Ps. 36:4).
- “All-day long they seek to injure my cause; all their thoughts are against me for evil” (Ps. 56:5).
- “The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Ps. 33:10–11).

³⁴Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 374.

- “*Deliver me, O Lord, from evildoers; protect me from those who are violent . . . Guard me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked; protect me from the violent who have planned my downfall*” (Ps. 140:1, 4)

Joseph states in Genesis 50:20b, “God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.” The good that Joseph is describing is the survival of many people. Hamilton argues,

We cannot be certain who is meant by many people. However, it does include Jacob’s family. The suffering and humiliation inflicted on Joseph by Jacob’s family becomes the means of the salvation of Jacob’s family. Many people might also include the citizenry of Egypt, as they too survived because of what Joseph’s God did with and through Joseph. Because of God’s providential turning of sour event into divinely used events in the life of one man, the chosen to survive, and the unchosen survive.³⁵

The discomfort of Joseph’s brothers stretched over a long period of time. In Genesis 37:35, Jacob refused to be comforted when he heard his sons’ story that wild animals had devoured Joseph. The brothers suffered from guilt since they mistreated Joseph, and they also introduced the agenda of death into the family. In Genesis 50:19 and 21, Joseph says twice to his brothers “fear not,” and their alienation, fear, and grief are overcome. At this time, Joseph comforted them as described in Isaiah 40:1-2: “Comfort, O comfort my people say your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” Brueggemann writes, “‘comfort’ is an exile-ending word, as recorded in Isaiah 40:1–2, and in Genesis 50:21, ‘comfort’ is paralleled by ‘speak to the heart.’”³⁶

³⁵ Hamilton, *The New International*, 706–707.

³⁶ Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation*, 376–377.

Joseph was well aware of the call of God upon his life, which was to be the vessel to fulfill the promises of God. Joseph reassured his brothers that he would continue his godly vocation by “providing for you and your little ones.” (Gen. 50:21a). He gave them homes to live in, work to do, food to eat, and provision for their needs.

Theological Analysis of Genesis 50:15–21

Although this exegesis has focused on Joseph’s encounters with God in Genesis 50, the patriarchs had experienced theophanies long before the events recorded in this passage. Joseph’s ancestors—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—often spoke directly to God. Genesis 12:1–4 describes the moment when God commanded Abraham to leave his father’s house to go to a new land and promised to make Abraham into a great nation, make his name great, and use him to bring blessings to others. In Genesis 26:12–5, Isaac, like Abraham, was promised land, offspring, and a blessing that would be for all the nations. Finally, in Genesis 35:1a, God appeared to Jacob and directed him to “Arise, go up to Bethel and settle there.” God also appeared to Jacob again in Bethel, changed his name to Israel, and continued the covenant relationship with promised land to him and his descendants.

As explained in *Genesis: An Introduction*, “Divine oracles were communicated directly and immediately only to the patriarchs, for the patriarchal period knows nothing of the cultic or other mediator of such oracles; whatever priestly functions existed, they were exercised by the patriarch.”³⁷ Joseph’s story does not show an account in which Joseph speaks directly with God. He is not one of the three primal patriarchs. As a result,

³⁷Claus Westermann, *Genesis: An Introduction* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 254.

no oracles are communicated to him, and he has no priestly role. In addition, the story takes place in Egypt, and there is no description of the formal worship in which Joseph participated.

Additionally, God appeared and spoke to His people in visions and dreams (Gen. 13:1, 12; 20:3; 28:10–17; 31:24; and 46:2). Sometimes the dreams were pictorial, indirect messages and required an interpretation. God was with Joseph as he interpreted dreams. Joseph described his ability to interpret dreams in a conversation with Pharaoh: “Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I have had a dream, and no one can interpret it’ . . . ‘I am not able to,’ Joseph answered Pharaoh. ‘It is God who will give Pharaoh a favorable answer’” (Gen. 41:15–16). God’s presence had been Joseph’s constant companion. God was with Joseph throughout his entire journey, and he became a successful man, serving in the household of his Egyptian master (Gen. 39:1–6, 21–23).

Yee, Page, and Coomber state that the Joseph novella provides the basis of a theology of hope for those desperately groping for God’s hand:

[i]n the midst of the overwhelming darkness that often attends human experience in a world shaped by human rebellion. The providence that has been at work from the dawning of the world at the outset of creation to this point of the redemption of Joseph and his reconciliation with his brothers will sustain the sons of Israel no matter what obstacles they may and soon, will, face.³⁸

Conclusion

Joseph believed in his father’s God. Despite the obstacles in his life—including family dysfunction, betrayal by his brothers, the sudden and unexpected separation from

³⁸ Yee, Page, and Coomber, *The Old Testament and Apocrypha*, 132.

his father, family, homeland, and ultimately, his false imprisonment—Joseph still expected God to operate and fulfill the dreams imparted to him as a child. God's presence throughout Joseph's life was hidden, yet God's purpose was operating as the woven thread tying together every step made by Joseph and those made against him. God placed a calling—divine purpose—on Joseph's life at a young age. Not yet emotionally and spiritually mature, Joseph bragged about his dreams by sharing them with family members, which led to his siblings harboring resentment and hatred.

The hatred felt by the brothers was not directed at the dream, but primarily towards the one elected by God to interpret and communicate the dream as a vocation. Frustrated and left wondering why God chose Joseph and not them, the siblings were further emboldened with evil and hatred towards God's choice and created a resolve to make Joseph's life difficult—either through physical abuse, emotional abuse, or death.

In total, Joseph spent thirteen years enduring one disappointment after another before God led him out of the pit and into the palace of Pharaoh. Those disappointments in Joseph's life were the same events through which God prepared Joseph for his vocation (calling) and the vocation for Joseph. As a seventeen-year-old boy, Joseph was not ready for all God had in store for him. God also was preparing the situation for Joseph. It was not until Pharaoh had his dreams and could find no one in his kingdom to interpret them that God delivered Joseph from prison and into his vocation. Joseph's disappointments were blessings, and he acknowledged this when he spoke to his brothers in Genesis 50:20: "You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people."

Joseph's story is an inspiring account of a man with strong faith who survived childhood traumas. Scriptures recording the Joseph narrative do not ascribe to Joseph any emotional experience following his traumatic events. Scholars argue that "This lack of mention of any emotion suggests the involvement of unconscious defenses and describes a numbed Joseph who was able to move on successfully. However, years later, with the appearance of his brothers in Egypt, Joseph's emotional reaction emerges."³⁹

The Joseph narrative strongly emphasizes the connection between the Holy Spirit, election, purpose, and forgiveness. It provides a model for handling traumatic stress that is available to all of God's children. This lesson suggests that healing and wholeness are possible after emotions kept from awareness have been consciously acknowledged. Mann writes,

Joseph was unable to forgive until he finally experienced the depth of his emotional pain. The arrival of Joseph's brothers in Egypt provided the trigger that enabled the painful process of healing to begin, the love for his father to emerge, and the meaning of the events in his life to become apparent.⁴⁰

In short, Joseph was obedient to his father, hated and rejected by his brothers, sold as a slave, falsely accused, unjustly punished, and finally elevated from the place of suffering to a powerful throne. The hand of God was evident in every aspect of Joseph's life, ruling and overruling the decisions people made. In the end, God built a leader, saved a family, and created a nation that would bring blessing to the whole world.

Individuals in all walks of life from various backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and socio-economic and cultural differences have experienced childhood traumas. These

³⁹ Samuel J. Mann, "Joseph and His Brothers: A Biblical Paradigm for the Optimal Handling of Traumatic Stress," *Journal of Religion and Health* 40, no. 3 (Fall, 2001): 337, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1012564831769>

⁴⁰ Mann, "Joseph and His Brothers," 340.

generational traumas are often transmitted from grandparents and parents, thus contributing to bad habits, recurring emotional issues, poor interpersonal relationships, or other challenges. Joseph's experience reflects the experiences of many others who have endured intergenerational childhood maltreatment.

In the next chapter, I will reflect on another example of God's divine providence and transformation in the life of Pandita Ramabai. Ramabai founded Sharada Sadan and Mukti Mission Home and Salvation for impoverished women and girls. I will explore Ramabai's experience with generational trauma and focus on her early influences, including her father, Dorothea Beale, Rachel Bodley, and Frances Willard. I will demonstrate how Ramabai challenged her culture, overcame generational consequences, cultivated a deeper faith above from God, and committed to a life of servanthood.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

God's divine providence, healing, and restoration are available to all of God's creation, as demonstrated in the life of Pandita Ramabai. Ramabai's life is an example of a woman who experienced transmission of traumatic abuse from several prior generations, which originated from the family's religious belief, extreme poverty, and patriarchal culture. According to missionary and author Eddie Hyatt:

Pandita Ramabai is one of the most remarkable Christians in the church's history and a historic testimony of God's transformative power. Overcoming a life steeped in Hinduism, poverty, and a culture that demeaned women, she rose to become a shining light for Jesus in India and throughout the rest of the world.¹

This chapter examines the life of Pandita Ramabai and her early influencers, which included Anantshastri Dongre, her father who required her to study Sanskrit; Dorothea Beale and Rachel Bodley, educators; and Frances Willard, a social reformer. All financially supported her development of a mission for Indian women and girls. A brief biography for each figure will be provided, followed by a consideration of their influence upon Ramabai. Ramabai's founding of Sharada Sadan and Mukti Mission Home and Salvation, which she opened for destitute women and girls, will be discussed.

¹ Eddie L. Hyatt, "Foreword," in *India's Woman of the Millennium: Pandita Ramabai—Her Story in Her Own Words* (Grapevine, TX: God's Word to Women, Inc., 2019), 5.

Key themes in Ramabai's life, including true conversion to Jesus Christ, the sovereignty of God, and servanthood, will be examined.

Brief Biographies of Pandita Ramabai and her Early Influencers

Anantshastri Dongre—Key Influencer (1796-1874)

Influences on Ramabai's life start several decades prior to her birth with the life of her father, Anantshastri Dongre.

Anant Dongre was born around 1796 in south Karnataka, in a Chitpavan Brahmin family. He was married at a young age, but against his desires, as a result, he ran away from home to study Sanskrit texts.²

He eventually advanced to studying under Ramchandra-Shastri Sathe, a teacher of Peshwa Bajirao II and he often observed Peshwa's wife reciting Sanskrit verses.³

Customarily, during this period, women in Marathi were forbidden to achieve literacy, and they were not allowed to learn Sanskrit, the divine language reserved solely for Brahmin men. Peshwa's wife's ability to read and speak fluent Sanskrit inspired Dongre to emulate the ruler and advocate for women's literacy throughout his life.

Dongre received the honorable title of *Shastri*, which represented an educational degree. Following this, Dongre desired to teach his wife to read. He attempted to educate her but was frustrated by the resistance of his older and more conservative family

² Meera Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai: Life and Landmark Writings* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 7.

³ Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 7–8.

members' to women's education. Eventually, Dongre's first wife died, leaving him with his only surviving children: a married daughter and a son.⁴

Following his wife's death, Dongre became a devotee of Vishnu by joining a Vaishnava sect. Dongre traveled extensively and was often honored by royalty with substantial wealth.

In one of Dongre's pilgrimages, he met an impoverished Chitpavan Brahmin vagabond, Abhyankar, who gave him his nine-year-old daughter in marriage. The young girl's name was changed to Lakshmibai and years later she gave birth to Ramabai.⁵

Dongre was an orthodox Hindu who adhered to caste and other religious rules; however, he firmly believed people of the Shudra caste should learn to read and write the Sanskrit language and learn sacred literature. He taught his new bride Sanskrit, which caused an uproar in his family and pressure within the community. Dongre defended his belief in women's education to scholars and priests by providing citations culled from various Sanskrit religious texts and compiled into a scholarly volume that proved women and Shudras could learn Sanskrit but not study the Vedas.

Following the discourse with and social censure by family and the Brahmin community, Dongre and his young bride, Lakshmibai, moved to live in the Gangamul forest. In the Gangamul forest in about 1845, Dongre built an *ashram*, a residential school for the Sanskrit education of Brahmin boys.

⁴ Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 8–9.

⁵ Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 10.

A Brief Biography of Pandita Ramabai (1858–1922)

Born on April 23, 1858, Rambai was the sixth child of her father, Dongre's, second family, and the youngest of the three surviving children.⁶ Lakshmibai, Rambai's mother, "educated Ramabai in the ancient scriptures, religious knowledge and Sanskrit."⁷

Ramabai and her family lived as pilgrims, wandering from one shrine to another across India serving as readers of Puranas, known as Puranikas, the public preachers of religion among the Hindus. The family traveled the region in poverty, earning sporadic income by reciting from the mythology and discoursing the philosophical texts. This way of life continued until the death of Ramabai's parents and oldest sister, Krishnabai, from starvation during the famine of 1874 to 1876.

After the tragic loss of her family members, Ramabai and her brother, Shrinivas, continued this familiar pilgrim way of life, which was marked by poverty and extreme physical hardship. Both Ramabai and Shrinivas lacked advanced secular education or the ability to earn wages in another manner. Thus, they continued the family tradition of visiting sacred places and worshipping gods and goddesses to get food and shelter. This unconventional lifestyle outside Ramabai's Brahmin community allowed her to escape the rigid gender code for females. Females were typically yoked to wifehood and motherhood at an early age, confined to domestic housekeeping tasks, subjected to the pressures of the extended family, and denied an education or even literacy. Instead,

⁶ Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 7.

⁷ Tejashri Chindhade, "Presenting and Comparing Early Marathi and German Women's Feminist Writings (1866–1933)," PhD diss, (Pennsylvania State University, PA, 2010), 84. https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/6279.

Ramabai was treated as her brother's equal because of her education and training in addressing mixed audiences as a public preacher.

In 1878, Ramabai and Shrinivas visited Bengal, and Ramabai was “publicly examined by a small panel of Sanskrit scholars” and awarded the titles of “Pandita” (woman scholar) and “Saraswati” (Goddess of Learning). The first title, Pandita, was always used in Maharashtra. After wandering for several years, they traveled to Calcutta where Ramabai was “inducted into the socioreligious reform circle of the monotheistic Brahmo Samaj; specifically, for women's education for which she lectured widely within the Bengal Presidency.”⁸ While living in Calcutta, Ramabai continued her public lectures and often received requests for private speeches to the *Pardah* women on the duties of women according to the Shastras. These women were kept in relative isolation through the use of veils, screens, and curtains according to a Muslim custom that was later adopted by many Hindus in India.⁹ *Pardah* women

were virtual prisoners. They had little or no contact with anyone except their own family; they received little or no news from the outside world. They were deprived of conversation with others in the community. These women-led dismal, tedious lives without books, amusements, knowledge of the outside world, or even nature itself.¹⁰

Their seclusion was so complete that their intellectual and social development was stunted. A woman could be twenty or thirty years old, but her intellectual development might well be equivalent to what we would expect of an eight-to-twelve-year-old girl.

⁸ Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 14.

⁹ Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica, “Purdah: Islamic Custom,” In *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (The Britannica Group, 2022). <https://www.britannica.com/topic/purdah>.

¹⁰ Irene H. Barnes, *Behind the Pardah: The Story of CEZMS Work in India*. (London, UK: Marshall Brothers, 2016), 51.

“Hindu women were taught a law about themselves: We (women) are like animals; we can eat and work and die, but we cannot think.”¹¹

During this period in Calcutta, Ramabai studied the Dharma Shastras, the sacred epics, the Puranas, and modern poets. Also, as advised by a “Bengali reformer: Keshab Chander Sen, she read the *Vedas* and *Vedanta*, which Ramabai had believed were prohibited to women.”¹²

From her more profound Hindu studies, she learned that these books and popular preaching agreed:

Women of high and low caste, as a class, were bad, very bad, worse than demons. The husband is said to be the woman’s God; there is no other god for her. This God may be the worst sinner and a great criminal; still, He is Her God, and she must worship him.¹³

With this deeper understanding of Hindu teachings, Ramabai lost her faith in the religion of her ancestors—Brahmin. This did not hinder Ramabai and Shrinivas from providing public lectures; they continued this form of work as they traveled through the Bengal Presidency.

The life of pilgrimages exposed Ramabai at a young and impressionable age to oppression amongst women, ranging, for example, from a child-wife being publicly battered by her marital family, to an expecting mother being threatened with desertion unless she produced a son, and the drawn faces of even wealthy, elite women who were childless. Also, the private speeches to the pardah women revealed the most depressing and mournful sight of the child-widow. Widowhood was considered punishment for a

¹¹ Barnes, *Behind the Pardah*, 44.

¹² Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 15.

¹³ Hyatt, “Foreword,” 20–21.

crime that the widow committed in a former life. Worse still was becoming a child-widow or a childless young widow; they were considered cursed and suffered at the hands of the community. In addition to being subjected to indignities such as head-shaving and forced fasting during the year-long mourning period, the child-widow was hated and shunned by her own family for life.

Only a few years after her parents' passing, "on May 15, 1880, Ramabai's brother, Shrinivas died in Dhaka from over-exertion and poor health. Shrinivas had often worried about his sister's future, especially concerning who would protect her if he became unable."¹⁴ Anantshastri Dongre, Ramabai's father, had his oldest daughter married to a young man of the same age, but they were unequally yoked as he chose not to study or lead a religious life with Ramabai's sister. With the oldest daughter's marriage as an example, Dongre had chosen not to give his youngest daughter away as a child bride; instead, he gave Ramabai a chance to study and lead a religious life until she chose to marry, which was against the caste rules.

Shortly after Shrinivas's passing, on June 13, 1880, Ramabai married a friend of her beloved brother, a Bengali lawyer named Bipin Bihari Medhavi.¹⁵ Medhavi was not a Brahmin but was from a low caste. He belonged to the Brahmo Samaj, which Ramabai also supported. Medhavi's family objected to this inter-caste and interregional marriage. However, the marriage was performed under the Brahmo Civil Marriage Act (III of 1872).¹⁶ On April 16, 1881, Ramabai gave birth to their daughter, Manorama ("heart's

¹⁴ Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 17.

¹⁵ Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 17.

¹⁶ The Act legalized marriages between Brahmos, between persons who did not profess any specific religion, or between persons who followed different religions; in brief, priests could not perform these marriages.

joy”).¹⁷ Tragically, only a few months later, Medhavi died after contracting cholera.¹⁸

Ramabai returned to her former occupation to support herself, lecturing on ancient Hindu literature in Poona, the capital of her home state in western India. As she lectured, she promoted the right of women to be educated. She was instrumental in organizing “the Arya Mahila Samaj, the Aryan Women’s Society, a women’s education and medical and social reform movement.”¹⁹

While living in Poona, Ramabai was eager to learn about the Christian religion. She stayed with missionary workers who were part of Wantage Sisters of St. Mary, the Virgin. They taught her about the New Testament, explained the difference between the Hindu and Christian religions, and taught her English. During a visit with the Wantage Sisters in Poona, Ramabai realized the benefits of modern English education and discussed her plan to improve the lives of high-caste Hindu widows with the sisters. Consequently, “Ramabai decided to move to England and raised passage money by writing the book *Stri Dharma Neethi*.²⁰

In 1883, Ramabai and her daughter traveled to the United Kingdom, where she was introduced to the Church of England Sisterhood at Wantage, who showed kindness and provided spiritual influence. Ramabai’s intention in relocating to England was to

¹⁷ Helen S. Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai: The Story of Her Life*. 1914, repr., Miami, FL: HardPress Publishing, 2013, 12–13.

¹⁸ Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai*, 12–13.

¹⁹ Anne C. Kwantes, *She Had Done a Beautiful Thing for Me: Portraits of Christian Women in Asia* (Manila, Philippines: OMF Literature, 2005), 129.

²⁰ Alka Mudgal, “Pandita Ramabai,” *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 74, no. 2 (April-June 2013), 348.

study medicine and become a physician. Unfortunately, shortly after her arrival, Ramabai was diagnosed with a hearing impairment. Thus,

she changed her vocational focus and studied mathematics, science, and literature at Cheltenham Ladies College. Ramabai taught [the language of] Marathi at Wantage to the sisters who would be sent to India, and also, she and her daughter, Manorama, received the sacrament of Christian baptism while at Wantage.²¹

As part of Ramabai's religious training at Wantage, she visited homes for the poor where Anglican Sisters of the Cross carried out their work. This missionary work prompted self-reflection and a crucial conversation for Ramabai:

I began to think that there was a real difference between Hinduism and Christianity. I asked the sister who instructed me to tell me what made the Christians care for and reclaim "fallen" women. (The Sister) read the story of Christ meeting the Samaritan woman and His wonderful discourse on the nature of true worship. . . I had never read or heard anything like this in the religious books of the Hindus. After reading the 4th Chapter of St. John's Gospel, I realized that Christ was truly the Divine Saviour He claimed to be, and no one but He could transform and uplift the downtrodden womanhood of India.²²

After this revelatory experience, "Ramabai sought a meeting with Sir Bartle Frere, the former governor of Bombay Presidency, and followed it up with an appeal for help, written originally in Marathi and published in 1883 with a title *The Cry of Indian Women*."²³ In her letter, she noted that

the Objects of that Association (Arya Mahila Samaj) are three—first, to put a stop to the marriage of children; second, to prevent a man remarrying while the first wife is living; third, to give help to destitute women; and to encourage female education.²⁴

²¹ Pandita Ramabai, *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1901), 18.

²² Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Clouds of Witnesses: Christian Voices from Africa and Asia* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), 139.

²³ Alka Mudgal, "Pandita Ramabai," 348.

²⁴ Pandita Ramabai, "The Cry of Indian Women," in *Pandita Ramabai: Life and Landmark Writings*, ed. Meera Kosambi (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 112.

Although Ramabai's letter, "The Cry for Indian Women," was widely distributed, Ramabai received little support for her dream of establishing a home for high-caste widows while in England.

In 1886, Ramabai and Manorama traveled to the United States upon an invitation from Dr. Rachel Bodley (1831-1888) to attend the graduation of a relative, Anandibai Joshi, the first Indian woman to earn a medical degree from the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania.²⁵

This initial visit to the United States launched Ramabai's career as an educationist and missionary. She became a solid cultural addition to the feminist and other reform circles, specifically in Philadelphia and Boston. As a result, Ramabai's three-month planned trip to the United States turned into a three-year residency (March 1886–October 1888), during which she lectured on women's rights and education. She also completed a year of study focused on childhood education techniques introduced by the German educator Friedrich Froebel. Additionally, she translated Froebel's teaching materials and curriculum into the Marathi language. She often discussed with Dr. Bodley her dream to help the women of India.

While in the United States, Ramabai wrote a book, *The High-Caste Hindu Woman*. The book provided an introduction to Ramabai's life and depicted the religious-social structure that dictated the lives of Indian women. She eventually traveled across the United States, giving lectures and promoting her plan to develop a residential school for high-caste widows in India. With financial backing from the Ramabai Association,

²⁵ Edith L. Blumhofer, "From India's Coral Strand: Pandita Ramabai and US Support for Foreign Missions," in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home: Explorations in North American Cultural History*, eds. Daniel H. Bays and Grand Wacker (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 156.

formed by her supporters in the United States, and from other friends in the United Kingdom,

in 1889, Ramabai returned to India and opened *Sharada Sadan* ('home of learning/wisdom') in Bombay, home and school for high-caste child widows. In 1898, Ramabai opened the Mukti Mission, modeled on women's institutions in the United Kingdom and America.²⁶

God honored the prayers of Ramabai, her daughter Manoramabai, and others who ministered alongside her. Mukti Mission proclaimed the Christian gospel to those seeking refuge, especially any girl or woman in need. For her service to the Indian education system, Ramabai received the Kaiser-e-Hind medal from the British government in 1919. Sadly, three years later, Ramabai passed away in 1922 at the age of sixty-four. The Indian government commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Mukti mission by issuing a postage stamp honoring Ramabai in 1989.²⁷

Dorothea Beale, Founder of Cheltenham Ladies' College (CLC) & Dr. Rachel Bodley, Dean of Medical College of Pennsylvania

Ramabai's testimony was deeply affected by her relationship with Dorothea Beale (1831–1906), the founder and principal of the Cheltenham Ladies' College (CLC), a school "devoted to educating women."²⁸ In exchange for her room, board, and education, Ramabai taught various Indian languages to future women missionaries. Her time at Cheltenham College helped her understand the education system in England and the

²⁶ Ramabai, *The High-Caste*, 29.

²⁷ Hyatt, "Foreword," 7.

²⁸ Cheltenham Ladies' College, *The Cheltenham Ladies' College: A Brief History and Guide* (Cheltenham, UK: Activa, 2001), 1.

works of Christian Missionaries. Beale developed CLC into a prestigious school for the education of young ladies and mentored Ramabai in England for two years.

Another major influence on Ramabai in this period was Dr. Rachel Bodley, “president of the Women’s Medical College of Pennsylvania, the first medical college in the world, founded in 1851, to grant degrees to women.”²⁹ Bodley, not only a socially prominent and well-connected chemist, was also concerned with women’s emancipation in India. She mentored Ramabai and invited Ramabai to witness the graduation of Anandibai Joshee, the first Indian woman to earn a medical degree.³⁰ Additionally, “an advance publicity in *The New York Times* (March 7, 1886) by Dr. Bodley opened all doors to Ramabai.”³¹

Ramabai was impressed by the liberal atmosphere and the freedom that women enjoyed in the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada. She was inspired by the educational opportunities for girls. She also understood the importance of proper exposure in the form of a good education from the early stage of life for girls. Ramabai spent a great deal of time training in foundational education and kindergarten. She translated several kindergarten school books to Marathi, which she envisioned would become study material for Indian students. She often thought of having such education systems in India for girls. Ramabai stated:

I am deeply impressed by and interested in the works of western women, who seem to have one common aim, namely, the good of their fellow beings. It is my dream someday to tell my country women, in their own language, this wonderful

²⁹ Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 122.

³⁰ Pandita Ramabai, *The Letters and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai*, compiled by Sr. Geraldine, ed. A. B. Shah (Bombay: The Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, 1997), 165.

³¹ Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 124.

story, in the hope that the recital may awaken in their hearts a desire to do likewise.³²

Frances Willard (1839–1898)

Frances Willard was born in Churchville, New York. She was raised in a devout Christian home and practiced Methodism. She earned a degree from the North-Western Female College and then went on to become “president of Evanston College for Ladies and then the college dean when it united with Northwestern University in 1873.”³³

Willard was a noted educator, social reformer, and proponent of the women’s movement, as well as a leader of the temperance crusade. Since women had no economic nor legal standing, intemperate men could drink away the couple’s collective fortunes with little recourse available to the women.³⁴ To counter this inequity, in 1874 the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was established.³⁵ That same year, Willard became a leader in the WCTU movement, serving as president of the Chicago chapter and the corresponding secretary of the national organization shortly thereafter. In 1897, Willard became the national president, molding the WCTU into the largest and most influential women’s society in the country.³⁶

³² Pandita Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai, the Widow's Friend: An Australasian Edition of the High Caste Hindu Woman* (Melbourne, Australia: George Robertson, 1903), 157.

³³ William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer, eds., *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 506.

³⁴ Susan Hill Lindley, *You Have Stept Out of Your Place: A History of Women and Religion in America* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 102.

³⁵ Ruth Bordin, *Women and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873–1900* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1981), xviii.

³⁶ Willimon and Lischer, *Concise Encyclopedia*, 506.

Willard promoted numerous petitions and was instrumental in founding the Prohibition Home Protection Party in 1882. Under her leadership, the WCTU broadened its concerns to include women's suffrage, politics, peace, and labor and economic reform. She traveled extensively, giving numerous lectures and pulpit addresses. As a result, the WCTU grew dramatically all over the country. Willard promoted a "Do Everything" policy that linked temperance to many social reforms.³⁷

In 1891, Willard was elected president of the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Willard enjoyed this success and popularity because of her unique appeal to both liberal and conservative women.

By envisioning all these concerns as an expansion of the Christian woman's concern for domesticity, Willard was able to appeal to many conservative women who would otherwise have dismissed these issues as outside their purview. Under the banner of home protection, Willard worked to promote the advance of God's kingdom through the efforts of women.³⁸

In early 1887, Willard and Ramabai met on the recommendation of Dr. Joseph Cook, an internationally acclaimed lecturer and author from Boston. Willard quickly became a strong supporter and friend of Ramabai. Willard made Ramabai a vice president of the India WCTU, superintendent of native work for India, and a World's WCTU lecturer.³⁹ She extended invitations to Ramabai to attend the annual meeting of the WCTU at Nashville, Tennessee, in November 1887, and speak at the convention of the International Council of Women held in Washington DC in March–April 1888. At the

³⁷ Lindley, *You Have Stept*, 105.

³⁸ Willimon and Lischer, *Concise Encyclopedia*, 507.

³⁹ Blumhofer, "From India's Coral Strand," 158.

Nashville WCTU convention, Willard introduced Ramabai as “our sister from abroad whose name and character have become dear to each, Pandita Ramabai.”⁴⁰

During these conventions, Ramabai and her appeal for the high-caste Hindu widows was a primary focus. Ramabai engaged with feminists such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mary A. Livermore, and Lucy Stone at these events. Ramabai’s popularity grew because of the timeliness of her visit, as Christian women in the United States were already attentive to the desperate plight of India’s women. Ramabai’s Christian credentials were her most significant asset in international networking, making her India work financially feasible.

Ramabai’s exposure to the feminist movement in the United States and her vision to improve the lives of high-caste Indian women prompted her to write her analysis, *The High-Caste Hindu Woman (HCHW)*. With the help of Bodley, who provided the introduction, and Willard’s leadership along with the WCTU, the *HCHW* book was privately published, and a fundraising effort was launched. The book was an immediate success as “The first edition of 9,000 copies was sold out within the first year, and the third edition with another 1,000 copies was ready by June 1888.”⁴¹

Willard promoted Ramabai’s book, *HCHW*, with the following public statements:

Frances Willard said in the WCTU paper, *The Union Signal of Chicago* (July 1887): “The Pandita has put herself into a book . . . in choicest English which is both a heartbreak and a joy.” *The Cincinnati Commercial Gazette* (September 3 1887) called this “Hindu woman’s story” the outline of a colossal tragedy,” while *The Press of Philadelphia* (September 11 1887) labelled the book “a cry for help.” To Frances Power Cobbe (*The Times* of London, October 1 1887) Ramabai’s proposed residential school for widows seemed “the best prospect of lightening

⁴⁰ Blumhofer, “From India’s Coral Strand,” 152.

⁴¹ Susie J. Tharu and Ke Lalita, *Women Writing in India: 600 BC to the Early 20th Century* (New Delhi, IND: Oxford University Press, 1993), 12.

the vast load of misery” inflicted upon Hindu women and “of generally leavening Hindu society with Christian sentiments towards women.”⁴²

As a result of this publicity, the Ramabai Association was formed in Boston in December 1887 to solicit funds for Ramabai’s proposed residential school for high-caste widows in India. Willard served as the vice president and the Reverend Dr. Edward Everett Hale (Unitarian pastor of South Congregational Church, Boston) as the president of the Association. A variety of vice presidents represented five denominations, the organization’s board of trustees was “composed a group of non-sectarian business and professional men,” and “a similarly non-sectarian executive committee was formed entirely of women.”⁴³ The board of the Ramabai Association technically held all of the organization’s property, while a second board, consisting of local Hindu leaders chosen by Ramabai, operated onsite.⁴⁴ Ramabai circles were established across America, enlisting members to pledge an annual subscription of a dollar for ten years. By 1890, 75 circles were established, and the Association headquarters were based in Boston. For ten years, the Association pledged financial support for a secular, non-sectarian residential school for high-caste Hindu widows in India; after that, the school was expected to be self-reliant.⁴⁵

⁴² Meera Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai*, 131.

⁴³ Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai*, 24.

⁴⁴ Blumhofer, “From India’s Coral Strand,” 160.

⁴⁵ Dyer, *Pandita Ramabai*, 26.

Residential Schools: Sharada Sadan & Mukti Mission

Sharada Sadan (Home of Learning)

On March 11, 1889, Ramabai opened Sharada Sadan, which was a home of learning for Hindu widows in Bombay with the financial support of the Ramabai Association. Sharada Sadan was the first residential school for Brahmin women—specifically widows, girls, and day scholars—in India providing formal education and training. Ramabai envisioned the school would assist the female students with economic self-reliance and a place to live. A year later, Ramabai moved the residential school to Poona “to reduce overhead costs and gain access to the orthodox cultural heartland of Maharashtra.”⁴⁶

In July 1891, Ramabai had secured enough donations from the United States to purchase two acres of land and acquire a commodious residence for the Sharada Sadan.

Soonderbai Powar, a high-caste Indian Christian teacher, and reformer worked with Ramabai. Powar brought a background in education, and along with Ramabai, her focus was Indian: food, furnishings, and schedule for the more than forty widows in residence.⁴⁷

When starting the Sharada Sadan school Ramabai stated, “I had resolved in my mind, that although no direct religious instruction was to be given to the inmates of my home, yet I would daily read the Bible aloud and pray to the Only True God in the name of Christ; that my countrywomen, seeing and hearing what was going on, might be led to enquire about the true religion and the way of salvation.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Meera Kosambi, “Multiple Contestations: Pandita Ramabai’s Educational and Missionary Activities in late Nineteenth-century India and Abroad,” *Women’s History Review* 7, no. 2 (1998): 197–198, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029800200171>.

⁴⁷ Blumhofer, “From India’s Coral Strand,” 162.

⁴⁸ Hyatt, *India’s Woman of the Millennium*, 50.

None of the women were urged to become a Christian, nor were any Christian religious practices incorporated into the school's curriculum. However, some women were curious about Ramabai's faith, and many became Christians after Ramabai shared information about Christianity.

In 1893, Ramabai acquired a farm and land about thirty-six miles from Poona. Her faith became more profound and personal during this time, giving Ramabai a daily sense of Christ's presence. She later wrote that she came "to know the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and have the joy of sweet communion with him."⁴⁹ Ramabai read books about significant missionaries, including *The Story of the China Inland Mission*, *The Lord's Dealings with George Muller* and *The Life of John G. Paton, Founder of the New Hebrides Mission*.⁵⁰ She often questioned why there were so few faith missionaries in India. The Holy Spirit stirred within Ramabai and asked, "Why don't you begin to do this yourself, instead of wishing others to do it? How easy it is for anyone to wish that someone else would do a difficult thing instead of doing it himself."⁵¹

In 1897, there was a widespread famine across Western and Central India. An estimated 37 million people died and another 44 million experienced food scarcity.⁵² Ramabai remembered her youth and the impact of famine on her parents and sister, who died from starvation. Ramabai trusted the Lord to lead her to rescue several girls and

⁴⁹ Pandita Ramabai, *Pandita Ramabai Through Her Own Words*, eds. Ramabai Sarasvati and Meera Kosambi (New York, NY: Oxford University Press), 314.

⁵⁰ Hyatt, *India's Woman of the Millennium*, 44.

⁵¹ Hyatt, *India's Woman of the Millennium*, 45.

⁵² "The Famine in India as a Missionary Opportunity," *The Methodist Review* 79, no. 3 (May 1897): 481.

women from India's devastated Central Provinces. As the 1898 edition of the *Missionary Review of the World* explains, "Ramabai had neither shelter nor funds to offer, but the conviction that God wanted her to rescue at least three hundred girls proved irresistible."⁵³ While the Sharada Sadan had a housing capacity of only sixty-five women, Ramabai took responsibility for 300 famine widows in 1897, whom she moved out of Poona to Kedgaon in 1899 following permission from the Ramabai Association.⁵⁴

Mukti (Salvation) Mission

The move to Kedgaon allowed Ramabai to change the school's curriculum to include formal religious instruction, which she had been prohibited from doing during the first ten years of her contract with the Ramabai Association.⁵⁵ The school established in Kedgaon is known as Mukti (meaning Salvation) Mission.

In 1898, the Ramabai Association's ten-year agreement with Ramabai ended, and the board dissolved and deeded the property in India to Ramabai. Shortly after that, Ramabai pleaded with British supporters in the Keswick Convention and United States supporters through Moody's *Northfield Echoes* for "1,000 Holy Ghost missionaries for India's 140 million women, more than 8.5 millions of whom were child wives under the age of fourteen."⁵⁶

⁵³ Pandita Ramabai, "Famine Widows," *Missionary Review of the World* (April 1898): 279.

⁵⁴ Kosambi, *Multiple Contestations*, 199.

⁵⁵ Kwantes, *She Had Done*, 135.

⁵⁶ "Keswick Convention Mission Report," *Keswick Week* (1898): 188.

India experienced additional famine in 1899 and 1900, which increased the growth of Mukti Mission with the addition of over 1300 destitute girls. By this point, Mukti Mission had received a reputation as “a hive of industry” run by the threefold law of “education for the mind, salvation for the soul, and occupation for the body.” The mission was divided into five individual sections which ministered to women based upon needs such as: a Hindu widows’ home; a home for Christian women; a rescue shelter (for the sexually abused); a home for women who were senior citizens; and a home for blind women.⁵⁷

The facility was maintained by the residents, who carried out the domestic chores, cleaning, and meal preparations and tended to the sick and shut in. Educational classes were offered based on government rules and regulations. Additionally, vocational training was provided in manual areas, including handicrafts, tailoring, basket-weaving, laundry, carpentry, and building skills.

Mary Lucia Bierce Fuller wrote that as Ramabai took in more girls during the 1900 famine, she “abandoned her original plan of a school for high-caste widows only, and took in girls of all castes, even thieving castes, aborigines, and out-caste scavengers.”⁵⁸ Mukti Mission grew to a community of women and girls of more than 2000 with the assistance of American and English women who came to help Ramabai.

Many women and girls volunteered to train for Christian work and served as evangelists within the village.⁵⁹ Ramabai taught the women the principles of tithing, and the residents gave tithes to support evangelism throughout Asia. Also, Ramabai’s

⁵⁷ Pandita Ramabai, “Ramabai’s Institution for Child-Widows,” interview by A. T. Pierson, *Missionary Review of the World* (January 1889): 487.

⁵⁸ Mary Lucia Bierce Fuller, *Triumph of an Indian Widow: The Life of Pandita Ramabai* (New York, NY: Christian Alliance Publishing Company, 1928), 52.

⁵⁹ Minnie F. Abrams, “A Bible Training School,” *Woman’s Missionary Friend* 33, no. 2 (Feb. 1901): 56.

daughter, Manoramabai, and Minnie Abrams (who worked with Ramabai) spent a year in Australia and New Zealand, establishing Ramabai Circles as another funding source.

The Mukti Mission doors remain open today and continue to provide housing for needy women and girls. Today the Mukti Mission also includes a hospital, chapel, onsite job training, nursery, adoption agency (for Indian parents only), Braille instruction, and education from preschool through junior college. The Mukti Mission's continuation fulfills Pandita Ramabai's lifelong dream to be a beacon of hope for women through education, salvation, and economic opportunities.

Conclusion

Ramabai was an Indian woman of deep faith. She practiced her father's religion, Hinduism, as a young girl, and, as an adult, she accepted Christ as her personal Savior and lived a divinely guided life as a Christian. She was fortunate to have an educated father, Anantshastri Dongre, who believed in the sacred Hindu literature and that women and Shudras should be educated. Ramabai was educated in traditional religious texts as if she were a boy; she became fluent in religious languages and was able to translate the Bible into various Indian languages and dialects. As an educated and self-reliant woman, Ramabai was able to know her mind and make her own decisions. She married late and chose her mate from a different community and caste. Ramabai lived as an equal with men, and she did not allow being a woman to hinder her from doing what she desired.

Unlike most Indian women, Ramabai traveled extensively across the continent of India and abroad to the United Kingdom and the United States. She was an engaging public speaker and frequently provided lectures and keynote speeches. In these public

forums, Ramabai would invoke her life narrative and the experiences of others around her to represent the situation of Hindu women in India.

Ramabai's views on education, child marriage, and treatment of widows were mediated by her biographical experiences—both hers and those of her mother, Lakshmibai's—having seen the value of education for the cultivation of the mind and for the capacity for independent thought intimately.⁶⁰

Ramabai positioned herself as a social reformer who was rational and educated, with radical views about the conditions of women during nineteenth-century colonial India. She firmly believed women should possess self-reliance and education. Her motto—self-reliance for women—directly contradicted the patriarchal system, which insisted on women's dependence on men in all things and on their seclusion in the home. Ramabai desired to create self-reliant women, no matter their social class or caste. She believed that women could withstand any difficulty if they became self-reliant.

Ramabai united women across the western continents for the cause of Indian women. Educators such as Dorothea Beale, Rachel Bodley, and Frances Willard were strong influencers who supported Ramabai's dream of a residential school for women and girls. Specifically, Willard utilized her position within the WCTU and her Christian network to assist Ramabai with fundraising.

Ramabai obtained foreign support for a domestic cause by leveraging relations within both Christian and Hindu faith communities. “For the first time in the history of Maharashtra, [Ramabai] opened institutions that provided shelter and food for homeless widows and other women so that they were not dependent on families that mistreated

⁶⁰ Vineeta Sinha, “Pandita Ramabai Saraswati (1858–1922),” in *Sociological Theory Beyond the Canon*, eds. Syed Farid Alatas and Vineeta Sinha (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 245.

them.”⁶¹ In addition to practical and emotional support, education, vocational training, and means of economic self-reliance were made available to Indian women of all castes and classes. Ramabai made the idea of women’s residential schools a reality that has been modeled by other Hindus. She “paved the way for women’s emancipation and led to the hope of their eventual equality.”⁶²

Reflections

Ramabai experienced intergenerational trauma unconsciously transferred from several generations, which included religious practices, extreme poverty, caste system, patriarchal culture that demeaned women through sexism, prohibiting education for females, and lack of financial independence. Ramabai was fortunate to have a father, a scholar of Sanskrit texts who defied his religious belief by educating his wife, who subsequently taught her young daughter Ramabai to read. Additionally, unlike Ramabai’s mother and sister, her father did not adhere to the custom of giving his daughter away in marriage as a child bride. Remarkably, Ramabai was shown favor in these critical areas of education and child marriage and was able to navigate her life following the loss of her parents and siblings with the support of other Christians.

In spite of Ramabai’s family’s religious belief and culture, she converted to Christianity and continued expanding her knowledge of the maltreatment of women that was caused by Hindu men while practicing their faith. Ramabai’s ministry was thus ignited and driven by the visible pain and suffering inflicted upon many women and girls

⁶¹ Meera Kosambi, “Women, Emancipation and Equality: Pandita Ramabai’s Contribution to Women’s Cause,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 23, no. 44 (October 29, 1988): 49.

⁶² Meera Kosambi, “Women, Emancipation, and Equality,” 49.

throughout India during the 1800s. Her ministry's original objective was to educate high caste Hindu woman; however, God opened Ramabai's eyes to much more. Likewise, the project's objective is to provide formal education and tools for abused women to identify their specific generational trauma and consequences and discover what is possible through forgiveness, spiritual disciplines, and healthy emotional practices. The ultimate goal is to break intergenerational cycles of abuse and to help develop self-reliant and confident women equipped to sow a positive legacy in the world.

The life, faith, and ministry of Pandita Ramabai led her to establish a residential facility to provide domestic, economic, vocational, and religious education for women and girls who suffered maltreatment from family members within the dominant Indian patriarchal and caste system. Examining Ramabai's life provided insight into the importance of leveraging a network of believers for collaboration and support. Most importantly, this study revealed that an intimate relationship with God and a deep understanding and commitment to the call of God upon one's life are critical for the success of a ministry, along with continuous prayer, divine guidance, and trust in the movement of God in one's life. One must wholly commit themselves, their will, and desires to the Lord, be vulnerable before God and others, and use one's testimony to witness what is possible with God regardless of circumstances, family of origin, culture, and sufferings.

The next chapter will investigate the theological foundation for healing those suffering from intergenerational trauma. By defining forgiveness from an Old and New Testament biblical and historical church perspective, a compelling argument will be made

that underscores the criticality of practicing forgiveness for an intimate relationship with God and emotional and spiritual healing.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

In Chapter Two, an explanation of Genesis 50:15–21 critically examined the life of Joseph and his personal sufferings from intergenerational trauma. Joseph spent thirteen years enduring one disappointment after another before God led him out of the pit and into the palace of Pharaoh. It was not until Pharaoh had troubling dreams and could find no one in his kingdom to interpret them that God delivered Joseph from prison into his vocation and, ultimately, to reconciliation with his father and brothers.

Joseph's brothers, with fear, approach him many years later, wondering if their younger brother would rescue them from starvation and, more importantly, bless their hearts and minds with undeserved forgiveness. as Genesis 50:16–17 describes:

So, they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Before he died, your father commanded. This is what to say to Joseph: ‘I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.’ Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father. Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

Joseph was not interested in revisiting the past nor rebuking the brothers for asking for reconciliation. Instead, he attempted to calm their fears and responded to his brothers with a rhetorical question: “Am I in place of God?” (Gen. 50:19). Victor Hamilton argues that Joseph's question could be extended to state that it was God's place

to impose retribution.¹ Vengeance is Yahweh's; He will repay if necessary.

In ancient Jewish traditions, as noted in the Old Testament scriptures, forgiveness of sins was an act of God. Anthony Bash, in his book *Forgiveness: A Theology*, explains that the ancient Jewish sacrificial system only cleansed “ritual or moral impurity through defilement or contagion, and there were no offerings for sins deliberately and intentionally committed. Forgiveness was a gift of grace, given if and when God wished.”²

Overview of Theological Theme

In this chapter, I will investigate the theology of forgiveness and its importance for those suffering with intergenerational trauma. Forgiveness is a choice. It is also critical to receive forgiveness when something has gone wrong and to forgive others when we have been hurt or wounded. Forgiving others is not easy; it takes time and effort. However, we must forgive if we are to be truly free. Forgiveness releases the forgiver, not the other person. It also changes our interactions with others and our spiritual and emotional outlook on life.

Throughout the scriptures, God forgives sins in an action known as divine forgiveness. This explains why Joseph asked, “Am I in place of God?” (Gen 50:19). Joseph understood that only God could grant forgiveness for sins; if humans forgive one another, that forgiveness is for behavior, known as interpersonal forgiveness. The deep pain Joseph must have felt from the trauma of his teenage years was expressed in the

¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis – Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 705.

² Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness: A Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 14.

flow of his forgiving tears. Joseph forgave, not because he had to, but because he loved and feared God. Joseph forgave because love, not hatred, filled his heart.

This chapter explores the theological theme of forgiveness by first defining it. Next, the theological significance of forgiveness is examined as the biblical basis of divine forgiveness as recorded in the Old and New Testaments. New Testament scriptures are analyzed to provide details of interpersonal forgiveness and humans' responsibility, particularly believers', to model Christ by establishing a discipline of forgiveness towards self and others for unjustifiable offenses. The Christian tradition is explored to understand the importance of forgiveness and why forgiveness matters according to historical theologians and scholars. Finally, in closing I will discuss the practical application of forgiveness for individuals who have experienced childhood trauma and why the theology of forgiveness is an effective tool for understanding breakthroughs in the healing and recovery process.

What is Forgiveness?

Defining Forgiveness

Forgiveness can be a complex event in the lives of people, the Church, and society. To add to the complexity of forgiveness, it has several meanings in psychological, philosophical, and theological formal communications. The concept of forgiveness operates in three fields of meaning: forensic forgiveness, therapeutic forgiveness, and redemptive forgiveness. These three fields of meaning are defined as follows:

- *Forensic forgiveness* refers to legal issues. When a code of conduct that putatively binds the involved parties was transgressed, retribution is required. A transaction that releases one party from retributive justice is forgiveness.
- *Therapeutic forgiveness* reduces one's motivation for avoidance and revenge and increases one's motivation for goodwill toward a specific offender. This second semantic field is where most psychological and psychotherapeutic definitions of forgiveness primarily operate.
- *Redemptive forgiveness* is the third semantic field in which the term forgiveness operates from a theological perspective. Redemptive forgiveness incorporates the dynamics of forensic and therapeutic forgiveness; however, as a theological category, it is not limited to these fields. Forgiveness is manifesting and sharing redemptive grace.³

Although these fields of meaning exist, interdisciplinary consensus around a definition of forgiveness has not been developed.⁴ This chapter will outline the discovery of the third conceptual domain, redemptive forgiveness, from a Christian theological viewpoint.

The Enright and the Human Development Study Group defines genuine forgiveness as “a willingness to abandon one’s right to resentment, negative judgment, condemnation, and subtle revenge toward an offender who acts unjustly, while fostering

³ F. LeRon Shults and Steven J. Sandage, *The Faces of Forgiveness: Searching for Wholeness and Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 14.

⁴ Roy T. Denton and Michael W. Martin. “Defining Forgiveness: An Empirical Exploration of Process and Role” *American Journal of Family Therapy* 26, no. 4 (1998): 281, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01926189808251107>.

the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him or her.”⁵ In the *Handbook of Forgiveness*, the definition of forgiveness as defined by McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen is “intraindividual prosocial change toward a perceived transgressor that is situated within a specific interpersonal context.”⁶ In the same book Worthington and Wade defined forgiveness as an individual or intrapersonal experience of forgiveness and an interpersonal process of forgiveness.⁷

From a theological perspective, the *Mercer Bible Dictionary* defines forgiveness primarily as an act of grace by which God overcomes or removes the barriers of sin that separate God from people, thus making fellowship possible.⁸ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* further states,

Forgiveness is an activity that is characteristic of a merciful and loving God who does not take pleasure in the death of the sinner and who is ready to pardon him once proper confession and atonement have been made. Forgiveness is a matter of divine privilege rather than human right, for the price of sin must first be paid before the conditions can exist for forgiveness to become a reality.⁹ The New Testament, specifically in Colossians 2:13–14 (NRSV), states: “And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross.”

⁵ Robert D. Enright and The Human Development Study Group, “The Moral Development of Forgiveness,” in *Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development*, eds. William M. Kurtines and Jacob L. Gewirtz, vol. 1 (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1991), 123.

⁶ Michael E. McCullough, Kenneth, I. Pargament, and Carl E. Thoresen, “The Psychology of Forgiveness: History, Conceptual Issues, and Overview,” in *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice* eds. Michael E. McCullough, Kenneth I. Pargament, and Carl E. Thoresen (New York, NY: Guilford, 2000), 9.

⁷ Everett. L. Worthington, Jr. and Nathaniel G. Wade. *Handbook of Forgiveness*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge Press, 2020), 11.

⁸ Watson E. Mills and Roger Aubrey Bullard, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991), 306.

⁹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, E-J (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979–1988), 340.

In these passages, when the Apostle Paul notes that the charges against us have been erased (canceled), he is describing our debt. It is not a debt of money, but rather of our sin that we cannot pay. So, for Paul and God, the debt is canceled. That is the biblical understanding of forgiveness. The primary Greek word for forgiveness in the New Testament means to “cancel a debt.”¹⁰

This form of forgiveness is known as *divine forgiveness*, which exists between God, the creator, and His creation, humanity. Moreover, God expects His creation to demonstrate human or interpersonal forgiveness when an individual’s sin, crime, or poor behavior may cause harm.

When defining forgiveness, it is also essential to consider what forgiveness is not. First, forgiveness is not pardoning. It does not condone an offense, implying that the offender’s action was justifiable. Forgiveness is not forgetting or denying; forgiveness involves surveying the damage one incurred through the hurtful actions of another and, eventually, remembering it differently, rather than trying to erase it from memory. These actions may be a part of a forgiving step. However, they do not describe forgiveness.¹¹

Finally, forgiveness is also not the same as reconciliation: “Forgiveness is an internal process; reconciliation is an overt, behavioral process of two or more people working out an existing difficulty.”¹² The act of forgiveness may include an apology and

¹⁰ David Stoop, *Forgiving Our Parent, Forgiving Ourselves: The Definitive Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2014), 124.

¹¹ Catherine T. Coyle, “Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Healing,” in *Forgiveness and Abuse: Jewish and Christian Reflections*, eds. Marie M. Fortune and Joretta Marshall (Binghamton, NY: Taylor and Francis Group, 2004), 96.

¹² Robert D. Enright and Richard P. Fitzgibbons, *Helping Clients Forgive: An Empirical Guide for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2000), 42.

modification of the relationship. Reconciliation between the offender and the victim may not always be wise, such as in situations of physical or sexual abuse. The offended party can internally forgive another and also elect not to restore the relationship. Put simply, “Forgiveness is one person’s individual choice to abandon resentment and to adopt friendlier attitudes toward a wrongdoer. It is a free choice on the part of the one wronged.”¹³

Biblical Perspective

Hebrew Bible and Old Testament

Yahweh (Jehovah) is the Old Testament name that describes God—“I am that I am” (Exod. 3:13–15). Yahweh is characterized as the living God, the God of creation. He is the God of Israel who has chosen the children of Israel as His people. He is the covenant God, a relational God who established a relationship of faithfulness, obedience, mercy, grace, and love with His people.

God requires holiness, obedience, and spiritual sacrifices from His people. Deuteronomy 13:4 records His instruction: “You must follow the Lord your God and fear him. You must keep his commands and listen to him; you must worship him and remain faithful to him.” Similarly, Leviticus 20:7 details God’s expectations for his people to be holy: “Consecrate yourselves and be holy, for I am the Lord your God.”

The Bible also describes the consequences of disobedience: “So now, correct your ways and deeds, and obey the Lord your God so that he might relent concerning the

¹³ Enright and Fitzgibbons, *Helping Clients Forgive*, 41.

disaster he had pronounced against you" (Jer. 26:13). Failure to honor God with these requirements makes it difficult for God to look away from violations of His law.

Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' iniquity, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands (Exod. 20:5–6).

Israel's sin continually damaged its relationship with Yahweh. God's chosen people cannot live without God and cannot approach God due to sin. Michael Morgan suggests that sin is a transgression of the divine law—disobedience to divine command and an affront to God, an act of rebellion. God is a just God. His normative response to sin is anger and retribution. Forgiveness is required to maintain Israel's covenant relationship with God. God shows mercy and compassion by covering the penalties due.¹⁴

Hebrew Bible and Old Testament Terms

The most common Hebrew word translated as forgiveness in the Bible is *sālah*, which means “to send away” or “pardon,” which God uses to pardon the iniquity of the people when they return to their covenant obligations. Another known biblical term is *nāsā*, “to lift” or “take away,” which is used frequently to describe “God’s forgiving iniquity and transgression and implies a sense of lightness and relief.”¹⁵ God is the responsible party for granting forgiveness to the children of Israel by showing mercy, pardoning, or taking away sin.

¹⁴ Michael L. Morgan, “Mercy, Repentance, and Forgiveness in Ancient Judaism,” in *Ancient Forgiveness: Classical, Judaic, and Christian*, eds. Charles L. Griswold and David Konstan (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 139.

¹⁵ Mills and Bullard, *Merger Dictionary*, 306.

In the Bible's opening chapters, we learn that God created humankind, specifically Adam and Eve, in his image. In Genesis 3:23, God was so angry with the couple for their disobedience that he cast them out of the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve's family line expanded, and sin was subsequently in full bloom. God saw that the behavior of humankind was evil most of the time. God's creation had become corrupt, and God regretted that he made man.

When the Lord saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he was deeply grieved. Then the Lord said, I will wipe mankind, whom I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them. (Gen. 6:5–7)

God decided to destroy every creature on earth with a universal flood (Gen. 6:9–19), but then he established a covenant with Noah. During this early time in history, God did not demonstrate evidence of forgiveness toward his creation. Additionally, Noah was a righteous man who found favor with the Lord. The scriptures do not record how Noah may have interceded with God on behalf of humankind, not to destroy the world.

Following this period, the Hebrew Bible and Old Testament depict God's covenant relations with His chosen people as of critical importance. As such, God revealed divine forgiveness by responding through intercessions from those selected as patriarch leaders, prophets, and spiritual individuals on behalf of others.

In records of Ancient Israel, rarely is person to person forgiveness mentioned. In each instance where forgiveness is mentioned, the one requesting pardon is in a position of subservience and is petitioning for that to which he has no just or natural right.

Otherwise, forgiveness is sought from God after an offence is committed against him or his law.¹⁶

Examples of Divine Forgiveness

In Genesis 12, the Lord God established a covenant with Abram (later to be called Abraham), who became the patriarch of the Israelites. In Genesis 18, Abraham learns of God's plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and he intercedes on behalf of the people by asking God,

Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? You could not possibly do such a thing: to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. You could not possibly do that! Won't the Judge of the whole earth do what is just? (Gen. 18:23–25).

Abraham pleaded with God and attempted to talk God down from destroying righteous people. Each time God responded to Abraham's compassionate intercession by granting the request. Finally, in Genesis 18:32, God answered Abraham's last request by stating "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." God was committed to honoring the covenant relationship with Abraham by holding back his wrath and showing compassion to the people if ten righteous individuals were found in the city of Sodom of Gomorrah.

Another example of divine forgiveness is found when the Israelites created an image of a calf that outraged the Lord. When God expressed the desire to destroy the Israelites (Exod. 32:10), Moses pleaded with God not to destroy Israel, appealing to his reputation and character (Exod. 32:11–12). Moses asked the Lord to forgive their sin and, if not, erase his name from the book that God had written (Exod. 32:32). Moses was

¹⁶ Bromiley, *The International Standard*, 341.

willing to lay down his life for the ungrateful, sinful people, but God would not allow him to take their sin upon himself and be punished in their place. It is important to note that Moses himself was a sinner, so he could not bear the sin of others.

As a result of Moses' intercession, the Lord relented (Exod. 32:14). God did decide not to destroy Israel; however, this did not change his position toward the Israelites' sin. God did not wipe out the Israelites. Instead, he held them accountable for their wickedness:

He told them, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, ‘Every man fasten his sword to his side; go back and forth through the camp from entrance to entrance, and each kill his brother, his friend, and his neighbor.’” The Levites did as Moses commanded, and about three thousand men fell, dead that day among the people (Exod. 32:27–28).

Shortly after Moses interceded on behalf of the Israelites and received God's forgiveness, he asked the Lord, “Show me your glory, I pray.” (Exod. 33:18). God told Moses, “You cannot see my face, for no one shall see me and live” (Exod. 33:20). Moses wanted to see a visible manifestation of the invisible God. Instead, the Lord came down in a cloud, proclaimed his name, passed in front of Moses, and decreed:

The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the fathers' iniquity on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation (Exod. 34:6–7).

Shults and Sandage argue this passage to be the most important statement of forgiveness in the Hebrew Bible, primarily because the influence of the formula throughout the rest of Israel's testimony suggests that it expresses something fundamental about their view of

God.¹⁷ They may have understood that God's love is not permissive. The Lord is righteous and cannot overlook sin.

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, forgiveness is experienced by people as they turn toward God. Those who turn are given or promised forgiveness, while those who do not turn from their evil do not experience forgiveness. Israel understood that while divine forgiveness was primarily related to the sacrificial system, forgiveness is not limited to or controlled by the cultic ritual. Sometimes God forgives without a sacrifice, and not every sin can be dealt with by a sacrificial atonement. In sum, the Bible seems to exhibit a progression

from an early interpretation of God as not at all forgiving, to a picture of God as easily angered but open to forgiving, to a vision of an essentially merciful, gracious, and loving God who promises the blessing of complete forgiveness.¹⁸

New Testament

God is a just, merciful, holy, and forgiving God. He is the creator God, who formed humankind in his image. God is love. John 3:16 explains it this way: "For God loved the world in this way. He gave his one and only son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." Divine forgiveness is embedded in the identity of the Triune God. The New Testament records forgiveness as being enacted and embodied in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁹ As believers, we are to live a life that honors God, imitate his Son, Jesus Christ, who was holy and sinless, and

¹⁷ Shults and Sandage, *The Faces*, 127.

¹⁸ Shults and Sandage, *The Faces*, 133.

¹⁹ L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 219.

practice forgiveness. By establishing a practice of forgiveness, believers embrace the agape love that defines the core nature of God.

Extensive research on forgiveness done by biblical scholars such as Anthony Bash,²⁰ L. Gregory Jones,²¹ Miroslav Wolf,²² and others indicates there is little documented on the topic in the New Testament, and no biblical command for forgiveness exists. However, it is imperative to address the contemporary Church's organizing principle of Christian ethics, which is love, with forgiveness being the expression of what it means to love.²³ This expectation is revealed in Matthew 22:37–39, in which Jesus says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” In these passages, Jesus identified the most significant and vital command given by God to his people. God is relational, and He desires a relationship with His children. God loves His children, and He wants His children to love Him and to pursue His glory passionately. Love for God is consistently expressed when His children obey His commands (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3).

Jesus included a second part of the greatest command: forgiveness—"love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39). One cannot obey the first part of this greatest command without obeying the second. To love your neighbor is to decide to

²⁰ Bash, *Forgiveness: A Theology*.

²¹ Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*.

²² Miroslav Wolf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

²³ Bash, *Forgiveness: A Theology*, 123.

compassionately and righteously pursue his or her well-being, which includes practicing forgiveness of any wrongful behaviors. The two commands are inseparable.

In the following section, the teachings of the New Testament on forgiveness as it relates to the manifestation of divine forgiveness in Jesus Christ and human (interpersonal) forgiveness will be scrutinized.

New Testament Terms

In the New Testament, the Greek terms used for forgiveness are the verbs *apolýō*, *aphíëmi*, *charízomai*, and *kalýptō* and the nouns *áphesis* and *páresis*. *Apolýō*, used because of the analogy of sin to debt, denotes the release from debt. *Páresis* is used by Paul and means “passing over,” meaning that God had not executed the full measure of the retribution due to sin. The term *charízomai* is not found outside the writings of Luke and Paul, and the term, which means “forgive sins” or “to manifest grace,” is primarily Pauline.²⁴

Paul and Forgiveness

Anthony Bash states that the Apostle Paul’s writings have little to say on forgiveness, although the idea is implicit in his writings on justification. Justification is a juridical concept and does not explicitly imply forgiveness. However, it refers to God’s act of deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ, whereby persons are set

²⁴ Bromiley, *The International Standard*, 340.

or declared to be in proper relation to God and made total participants in the community of God's people.²⁵

Paul frequently uses the verb *charízomai*, which means “to manifest grace.” As explained in *The Faces of Forgiveness*, “In the Pauline writing, juridical concepts of forgiveness are subsumed into a large picture of life ‘in Christ.’ Forgiveness in the Pauline literature has primarily to do with relationships, and this qualitative concern seems to be the goal of any dealings with the quantum of sin.”²⁶

The following are two scriptural passages in which *charízomai* is used to express grace:

Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:3–4)

Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another, if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. (Col. 3:12–13)

In the Roman texts, Paul describes immersion baptism as a picture of the Holy Spirit identifying a believer with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. This means the believer has a new relationship to sin; he is “dead to sin” (Rom. 6:11). In Jesus Christ, we have died to sin, so we no longer want to continue in sin. Nevertheless, we are not only dead to sin, we are also alive in Christ. We have been raised from the dead and now walk in the power of His resurrection.

²⁵ Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 97.

²⁶ Shults and Sandage, *The Faces*, 137–138.

Colossians describes the eight graces of the Christian life which believers must put on: feelings of compassion toward one another, showing kindness toward others, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance (meaning to hold back), forgiveness, and love. God has forgiven us “for Christ’s sake” (Eph. 4:32), not for our own sake. We are chosen by God, set apart for God, loved by God, and forgiven by God. Moreover, God requires us as believers to extend grace—forgiveness—unto our brethren, just as God does for us.²⁷

Forgiveness in the Gospel of Matthew

Jesus taught the Lord’s Prayer to his disciples, and it is still used as a model of how to pray in nearly all denominations of the Christian faith:

Therefore, you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. (Matt. 6:9–13)

The Lord’s Prayer is an explanation of divine and human forgiveness. Specifically, Matthew 6:12 requests that God “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,” which emphasizes that forgiveness is integral to and a moral imperative of Christianity and is part of the unconscious narrative of many people.²⁸ The implied command comes with a promise that those who forgive will also be forgiven (Matt. 6:14–15).

²⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament*, vol. 2. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 137–138.

²⁸ Anthony Bash. *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, 79.

These two passages serve as an appendix to the prayer, which Jesus expanded on in the last phrase of Matthew 6:12, “as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Warren Wiersbe states that “Jesus was not teaching that believers earned God’s forgiveness by forgiving others, for this would be contrary to God’s free grace and mercy. However, if we have experienced God’s forgiveness, we will be ready to forgive others.”²⁹

Another example of divine and human forgiveness is identified in Matthew 18:23–35: the parable of the unforgiving servant. The parable emphasizes brother forgiving brother, as described in Matthew 18:15, 21:

If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. Then Peter came and said to him, ‘Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’

The parable in Matthew 18 deals with forgiveness between brothers, not between lost sinners and God. The parable can be summarized as follows:

1. Servant Man owes an outstanding debt unpayable to a king and pleads mercy.
2. King shows compassion, releases Servant Man and forgives him of the loan.
3. Servant Little Man owes a small payable debt to Servant Man; he begs for mercy and patience as he promises to pay back the loan.
4. Servant Man refuses to forgive Servant Little Man and throws him into prison.
5. King hears about Servant Man’s behavior and punishes him by throwing him into prison and retracting his initial forgiveness.

In this parable, we first learn of the King’s gracious act of forgiveness, far exceeding what the Servant Man expected or warranted, which precedes the Servant

²⁹ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 26.

Man's outrageous behavior towards Servant Little Man. In this way, the parable teaches that God's forgiveness is unconditional, at least initially. God does not wait to see whether sinners will forgive others before forgiving them.³⁰

Servant Man mistreated his brother and was unwilling to grant to others what he wanted others to grant to him. The Servant Man may have had the legal right to throw Servant Little Man in prison, but he did not have the moral right. Servant Man received forgiveness, but did not have a profound experience of forgiveness and humility. Human forgiveness is best seen as a description of what makes a person capable of receiving God's forgiveness and appropriating it rightly.³¹ In this parable, initially the king showered the Servant Man with unconditional forgiveness; however, his response to Servant Man's behavior displayed forgiveness based on conditions and was retracted. Similarly, to God the gift of forgiveness is retractable in the event of a human refusal to forgive. This is confirmed by several passages, including Ephesians 4:32 ("And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you") and Colossians 3:13 ("Bear with one another, and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.").

Before leaving this parable, it is necessary to discuss the question asked by the disciple, Peter, in Matthew 18:21³²: "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times?" The Lord's response was, "until

³⁰ Richard Bauckham, "Forgiveness: An Unpublished Sermon on Matthew 18:21–35" (2000), 4.

³¹ C. F. D. Moule, "The Theology of Forgiveness," in *Essays in New Testament Interpretation*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 71.

³² Matthew 18:21-22, Christian Standard Bible.

seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22). Jesus was teaching the disciples that forgiveness has no limits and love keeps no records of wrongs (1Cor. 13:5). A similar instruction on forgiveness is recorded in Luke 17:3–5³³:

Be on your guard. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and comes back to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him. The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.'

The number seven does not denote a limit to forgiveness. Jesus emphasized the need always to be ready to forgive others, for one day we may want them to forgive us. In these passages, the disciples responded by asking the Lord to increase their faith. True forgiveness is costly; it involves pain; somebody has been hurt, and there is a price to pay in healing the wound. Jesus responded (Luke 17:6)³⁴, "if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it will obey you." The image of the mustard seed conveys the idea of life and growth. The Lord understood that it takes living faith to obey these instructions and forgive others.

Forgiveness in the Gospel of John

In John 20:22–23³⁵, the resurrected Christ commissioned the disciples: "He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'" L. Gregory Jones states,

The Spirit works both to turn and return people to the power of Christ's forgiveness and to embody that forgiveness in relations with others. The Spirit enables those who have been forgiven by Christ also to become those who

³³ Luke 17:3-5, Christian Standard Bible.

³⁴ Luke 17:6, Christian Standard Bible

³⁵ John 20:22-23, Christian Standard Bible

forgive, seeking to restore communion with others in analogous fashion to the ways it has been restored to them.³⁶

It is the role of the Holy Spirit to guide the Church in understanding and practicing forgiveness in the lives of believers. As Christians lean into the discipline of forgiveness, the Holy Spirit will convict and call out the sins and wrongdoings in one's life that may require purging, repenting, forgiveness, and extending forgiveness to others. Jones states that, as the Church follows this practice, "the Spirit enables the Church to become a "carrier" of the forgiving truthfulness of Jesus. As such, the Spirit of Christ is at work in human life, bringing people to judgment and forgiveness so that our lives can again be marked by communion with God."³⁷

Historical Church Perspective

Early church theologians during the patristic period established forgiveness as a core principle of Christianity. The Apostles' Creed is evidence of the significance of forgiveness. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed were developed primarily to provide a summary of Christian faith for important religious occasions, such as baptism, as a uniform public declaration of faith. The last article in the Apostles' Creed indicates the belief of the convert, which includes the forgiveness of sins:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of the heavens and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary; he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; (He descended to hell;) on the third day he was raised from the dead; he ascended into the heavens, and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty' from where he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy

³⁶ Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, 129.

³⁷ Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, 131–132.

Spirit; in the holy catholic Church; (the communion of saints;) *the forgiveness of sins*; the resurrection of the flesh; and eternal life.³⁸

In addition, during the early Middle Ages, Hugh of St. Victor and Peter Lombard revised Augustine of Hippo's definition of sacraments. The revised definition accommodated the following seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, marriage, ordination, and extreme unction. The practice of penance started as a fundamental concept in the Roman law for the offended party to be satisfied by specific acts of repentance made by the offender.³⁹ During the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther attacked the Catholic Church for recognizing seven sacraments, and he then recognized only baptism and Eucharist as sacraments. Luther merged penance into baptism, as he believed the works of penance were not the source of reconciliation with God.

Various early church fathers interpreted repentance and forgiveness differently, given that Hebrews 6:4–6 describes forgiveness of believers this way:

For it is impossible to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened, who tasted the heavenly gift, who shared in the Holy Spirit, who tasted God's good word and the powers of the coming age, and who have fallen away. This is because, to their own harm, they are re-crucifying the Son of God and holding him up to contempt.

According to Tertullian and Novatian, “there were sins after baptism for which repentance and forgiveness were impossible. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas taught

³⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2017), 15.

³⁹ Shults and Sandage, *The Faces*, 140.

these Hebrew passages did not refer to repentance per se, but to baptism.”⁴⁰ Augustine distinguished between the forgiveness (or remission) of original sin, which occurred at baptism, and the forgiveness of actual sins committed after baptism, which were mediated through other sacraments.

The doctrine and practice of repentance still divide the Church today. However, all Christian traditions acknowledge the centrality of forgiveness and reconciliation and the need for repentance after baptism. A general understanding and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation exists regarding baptism and Eucharist. According to *Sanctified by Grace: A Theology of the Christian Life*, baptism is

the sacrament that signifies our forgiveness of sin by God. Baptism into Christ’s death and resurrection signifies our transition from one world marked by sin, destruction, and death to the world of God’s Kingdom, a world marked by forgiveness, love, and new life. The baptized are now defined by the forgiveness that Christ announced and enacted. It means the death of the old self and the creation of a new self ‘alive to God in Christ Jesus.’⁴¹

For this reason, baptism is unrepeatable.

Embodying Forgiveness explains that Eucharist, or the Lord’s Supper, as described in 1 Corinthians 11:23–28, is

an eschatological meal that recalls the past, anticipates the future, and sustains us in the present. It recalls the past of Jesus’ table, enacting the forgiveness of communion in concrete situations and lives, even as it also anticipates the messianic banquet in God’s Kingdom, to which all are invited and in which no one will be hungry. It recalls the past of our desertions and betrayals of Jesus on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, even as it also points us forward to the celebration of the Easter feast. The eucharist also recalls the particularities of our pasts even as it enables and teaches us to remember them in hope for the future of new and renewed friendship with God in God’s kingdom.”⁴²

⁴⁰ Kent Eilers and Kyle Strobel, eds., *Sanctified by Grace: A Theology of the Christian Life* (London, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 237.

⁴¹ Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, 166.

⁴² Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, 174.

The Lord's Supper (Eucharist) is an opportunity for Christians to remember Jesus Christ. In partaking of Eucharist, believers remember the body of Christ, given for us, and the cup of the blood He shed. We also remember that Christ died, how He died, and look ahead to His return. The Apostle Paul also speaks of the importance of believers examining themselves, confessing, and forsaking their sins while participating in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:28).

These two sacraments require that the Christian life is one of constant movement from baptism, in which the baptized is made initially holy, to the Eucharist, where that holiness is restored and completed. The Christian moves from the unrepeatability of baptism to the repeatable feast that is the Eucharist, constantly passing through repentance, the ongoing practice of confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation by which the faithful live into their baptism so that it might be completed in the Eucharist.⁴³

Conclusion

Rooting ourselves in the field of forgiveness theology provides three concepts of forgiveness: forensic forgiveness, therapeutic forgiveness, and redemptive forgiveness. Divine forgiveness and human-to-human forgiveness are different. Divine forgiveness is when God, the creator, erases or removes the record of charges of sin against His children. God examines the hearts of believers who seek forgiveness, searching for humility, repentance, and sorrow. To be forgiven by God is to experience morally regenerative grace. Human-to-human (or interpersonal) forgiveness is when God's

⁴³ Eilers and Strobel, *Sanctified by Grace*, 238.

creation—humankind—demonstrates forgiveness towards another member of creation who caused pain or harm due to sin (crime or poor behavior).

From the biblical perspective, the Hebrew and Old Testament scriptures illustrate a merciful, gracious, loving God who honored covenant relations and fulfilled the promises of complete forgiveness. In the New Testament, divine forgiveness is expressed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. People are born into a world full of sin and evil and often take on corrupt behavior. Jesus Christ died and was resurrected on behalf of humankind to bring about atonement and forgiveness for believers. God expects the forgiven to imitate Jesus Christ and live a life of holiness, love, and forgiveness.

The Apostles' Creed and the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist illustrate the historical church perspective on forgiveness. During the early church period, repentance and forgiveness have been interpreted differently. Today's Church, the doctrine, and practice of repentance are summed up in the principle that baptism is unrepeatable. The single action of baptism indicates God's forgiveness of our sins. Second, the Lord's Supper is a sacrament that is repeatable, since it serves as a reminder for Christians of Christ's death and resurrection. Forgiveness is a core principle and discipline for Christians desiring to grow spiritually.

Forgiveness theology is essential to those suffering from childhood generational trauma who desire emotional and spiritual recovery. Adult survivors of childhood abuse may need to establish a certain level of emotional maturity to recognize their dysfunctional family relations, their role in continuing the trauma, and their capacity to forgive. As individuals seek to heal from childhood wounds and live faithful lives of

Christian discipleship, they are often burdened with questions regarding forgiveness and reconciliation. They may agonize, wondering if they should forgive the perpetrator who trespassed against them, knowing the depth of the mercy and forgiveness that God has shown for *their* sins. They may also be conflicted with the rifts and scars of hurting others, and the need to confess, repent of their sin, forgive self, and seek forgiveness for wrongdoings. Individuals must understand the consequences of Christian forgiveness, the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation, the need for personal forgiveness, and if and when it is acceptable not to reconcile.

In the next chapter, we will inspect an interdisciplinary framework for adult survivors of childhood maltreatment—Component-Based Psychotherapy (CBP), a sub-discipline of psychology. CBP is an “evidence-informed model that bridges, synthesizes, and expands upon several existing schools or theories of treatment for adult survivors of traumatic stress,”⁴⁴ including exposure to psychological abuse as a form of complex trauma.

⁴⁴ Frances K. Grossman et al., “Treating Adult Survivors of Childhood Emotional Abuse and Neglect: A New Framework,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 87, no.1 (2017): 88, <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/ort0000264>.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The previous chapter revealed the importance of forgiveness in the spiritual life of a survivor of childhood abuse. As Frank Putnam declares, childhood abuse is not a diagnosis but a life experience. When determining a healing and recovery path for survivors, an interdisciplinary framework for trauma must be explored, starting with a definition of childhood maltreatment and intergenerational perspectives.

According to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, “child maltreatment” entails any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.¹ Neglect involves “a parent or caregiver’s failure to meet a child’s basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, security, and hygiene.”² Emotional abuse, or psychological abuse, occurs when parents/caregivers fail to create a beneficial atmosphere for a child and instead “repeatedly belittle, humiliate, reject, isolate, terrorize, ignore, or destroy the self-

¹ Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, Pub. L. No 111–320.

² Lisa Schelbe and Jennifer M. Geiger, *Intergenerational Transmission of Child Maltreatment*, (United Kingdom: Springer Cham, 2017), 2–3.

worth and esteem of a child.”³ In 2012, the American Academy of Pediatrics produced a policy report naming psychological maltreatment as “the most challenging and prevalent form of child abuse and neglect.”⁴

The *Child Maltreatment 2019* report documented that “an estimated 656,000 children were victims of abuse or neglect nationwide, which is a rate of 8.9 victims per 1,000 children in the population.”⁵ This nationwide estimation is certainly low, as these figures reflect only those cases known by the Department of Health and Family Services. Childhood abuse and neglect have become common, and many instances of child abuse go unreported.

Schelbe and Geiger’s research indicates that intergenerational childhood maltreatment occurs when a person who was abused or neglected as a child has the propensity to abuse and neglect his or her own offspring (victim-to-perpetrator cycles).⁶ However, Cicchetti and Carlson conclude convincingly that there is a scarcity of empirical evidence to support this claim. Being maltreated as a child may put one at risk for becoming abusive, but the path between these two points is far from direct or inevitable.⁷ That said, childhood maltreatment has detrimental implications on adult life,

³ Schelbe and Geiger, *Intergenerational Transmission*, 2.

⁴ Roberta Hibbard et al. “Psychological Maltreatment,” *Pediatrics*, 130, no. 2 (2012): 372. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2012-1552>.

⁵ Child Welfare Information Gateway, *Child Maltreatment 2019: Summary of Key Findings* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021), 2, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/canstats.pdf>.

⁶ Schelbe and Geiger, *Intergenerational Transmission*, 1.

⁷ Joan Kaufman and Edward Zigler, “The Intergenerational Transmission of Child Abuse” in *Child Maltreatment: Theory and Research on the Causes and Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect*, ed. Dante Cicchetti and Vicki Carlson (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 129.

which may negatively affect one's mental health, parental functioning skills, relationships, and employment.

Interdisciplinary Framework: Component-Based Psychotherapy

This chapter explores the interdisciplinary field of Component-Based Psychotherapy, which is a sub-discipline of psychology. Psychology is defined as a “scientific discipline that studies mental states and processes and behavior in humans and other animals.”⁸ The field of psychology has multiple theories that address various forms of mental health symptoms, behavioral patterns, and diagnoses related to adult survivors of childhood maltreatment or complex trauma. Individuals experiencing complex psychological trauma may exhibit major depression and reactive avoidance behavior. Examples of reactive avoidance include self-injury, risky sexual behavior, binge eating, reactive aggression, triggered suicidal behavior, drug or alcohol addictions, extreme gambling, excessive shopping, stealing, compulsive hair pulling, and skin-picking behaviors, to name a few. Individuals with psychological distress may receive psychotherapy from various paraprofessionals and professionals, including psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, mental health counselors, social workers, and religious or spiritual advisors.

Psychotherapy, also known as talk therapy, “involves an interpersonal relationship between therapist and client, and the conversation between therapist and

⁸ Walter Mischel, “Psychology,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified January 19, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/science/psychology>.

client.”⁹ Several theories, interventions, and psychotherapies have been developed to treat adult survivors of childhood maltreatment, including titrated memory processing, mindfulness training, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and family and couple therapy.

Different schools of psychotherapy theories have emerged as the practice has changed over time. There have been five waves of psychotherapy: first psychodynamic theories, then learning theories, then humanistic theories, then feminist and multicultural theories, and finally post-modern and constructivist theories.¹⁰ Today, talk therapy has become socially accepted, and processing personal experiences through talk therapy is no longer stigmatized. This new behavioral health norm may be attributed in part to the profound impact the COVID-19 pandemic had in America for specific populations.

There is no single mental health approach to treat the effects of physical, sexual, psychological, and neglectful childhood maltreatment. Many treatment modalities are combined methodologies, using multiple theories and medications, as

Scholars and clinical researchers challenge the adequacy of one-size-fits-all approaches to childhood trauma treatment, particularly when attempting to aid the recovery of adult clients with chronic, multilayered, and treatment-resistant psychological and psychiatric conditions.¹¹

Of nearly 100 distinct evidence-based or promising practices, not a single one of these models has been designed specifically to target the effects of childhood emotional

⁹ Bruce E. Wampold. “Research on the Effectiveness of Psychotherapy,” in *The Basics of Psychotherapy: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2019), 9.

¹⁰ Wampold. “Research on the Effectiveness of Psychotherapy,” viii.

¹¹ Elizabeth K. Hopper et al., *Treating Adult Survivors of Childhood Emotional Abuse and Neglect: Component-Based Psychotherapy* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2019), 11–12.

abuse and neglect in adult survivors.¹² Nevertheless, this chapter will examine Component-Based Psychotherapy (CBP), an interventional framework for adult survivors of childhood psychological maltreatment. CBP is considered a fifth-wave theory as it is aligned with a narrative, post-modern, solution-focused approach.

CBP is an “evidence-informed model that bridges, synthesizes, and expands upon several existing schools or theories of treatment for adult survivors of traumatic stress,”¹³ including exposure to psychological abuse as a form of complex trauma. This model integrates several prevailing theories and models of trauma treatment into a comprehensive, relational, strength-based, and social justice-informed approach to working with adult survivors of complex trauma, emphasizing the legacy of chronic childhood emotional abuse and neglect.¹⁴

CBP utilizes a phased-based approach for complex trauma survivors, which includes four key components: “relationship, regulation, working with dissociated aspects of the self, and narrative.”¹⁵

Rationale for Component-Based Psychotherapy

Many adult survivors of complex trauma exhibit disturbances across core functioning areas, such as emotion and behavior regulation, relational capacity, stress resilience, and belief systems. While treatment does attempt to reduce painful memories and symptoms of traumatic stress, it also seeks to accomplish far more by strengthening

¹² Frances K. Grossman et al., “Treating Adult Survivors of Childhood Emotional Abuse and Neglect: A New Framework,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 87, no.1 (2017): 86. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/ort0000264>.

¹³ Grossman et al., “Treating Adult Survivors: A New Framework,” 88.

¹⁴ Grossman et al., “Treating Adult Survivors: A New Framework,” 88.

¹⁵ Grossman et al., “Treating Adult Survivors: A New Framework,” 88.

survivors' personhood. Adult survivors with proper training may understand the importance of incorporating specific cognitive behavioral tools and spiritual disciplines to enhance their emotional and spiritual health and interpersonal relationships.

It is essential for survivors to evaluate interventions to determine a clinical plan that integrates a strong therapeutic connection with a professional who has demonstrated experience working with individuals from diverse social-economic backgrounds. In this setting, it is critical that faith, culture, and race are valued.

Interdisciplinary Theory – Component-Based Psychotherapy

The American Heart Association has recognized childhood trauma's long-term adverse mental and physical health effects. Individuals with histories of childhood abuse have an early age "onset of psychopathology, greater symptom severity, and more comorbidity, a greater risk for suicide and poorer treatment response than those with no history of abuse who may have the same diagnoses."¹⁶ The adverse effects, long-term impact, and psychic suffering caused by childhood maltreatment are significant. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also identified the "complex nature of the effects of childhood abuse and other chronic and sustained interpersonal traumas on adults, with the diagnosis of Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD)."¹⁷ CPTSD has been established as a distinct diagnosis in the International Classification of Disease (ICD-11) index. ICD-11 is a clinical diagnostic and procedural classification code used among healthcare providers for determining medical insurance eligibility, clinical care

¹⁶ Marylene Cloitre et al., *Treating Survivors of Childhood Abuse and Interpersonal Trauma: STAIR Narrative Therapy* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2020), 4.

¹⁷ Cloitre et al., *Treating Survivors*, 4.

management, billing, reimbursement, and financial decision-making. The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are encompassed within the CPTSD diagnosis, which also includes other adverse effects of childhood trauma.

CBP has been under development for several decades at the Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute in Brookline, Massachusetts. It is built on the principle that “The aftereffects of developmental trauma are complex, and the treatment is similarly complex and must involve a variety of treatment approaches customized to the needs of the individual client.”¹⁸ The most recent long-term treatment methodology is highly flexible and aligned with the complex treatment of CPTSD. It was developed with the specific intent to address the effects of emotional abuse in adult survivors and successfully call out its “invisible wounds” and impact.

An industry best practice for administrating psychotherapy is a phase-based approach and often includes three standard stages of therapy. Phase one focuses on ensuring safety and preparing for trauma memory processing, phase two focuses on processing traumatic memories, and phase three focuses on reintegration—fully resuming life. The “component-driven model of intervention” at the Trauma Center is “predicated upon the importance of client-therapist parallel process to therapeutic movement and client change.”¹⁹ CBP’s methodology, approach, and four foundational components are built directly upon the following four empirical bases of evidence:

- (a) the extensive clinical and research evidence base on the importance of processing traumatic memories and constructing a trauma narrative as an essential

¹⁸ Christine A. Courtois and Julian D. Ford. *Treatment of Complex Trauma: A Sequenced, Relationship-Based Approach* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2013), 9.

¹⁹ Jana Pressley and Joseph Spinazzola, “Beyond Survival: Application of a Complex Trauma Treatment Model in the Christian Context,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 43, no. 1 (2015): 12, <https://doi.org/10.1177/009164711504300102>.

component of treatment of traumatic stress; (b) the evolving awareness across disciplines of psychology and psychiatry that the quality of engagement, empathic rapport, and authenticity in the client-therapeutic relationship is integral to the treatment process; (c) the expert guidelines of the International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies highlighting the importance of phase-based approaches to trauma treatment that foster emotion regulation prior to traumatic memory processing through specific efforts to increase the client's capacity to identify, tolerate, safely manage or 'modulate,' and appropriately express emotions as an essential component of complex trauma intervention; and (d) the forthcoming expert consensus guidelines from the International Society for the Study of Trauma and dissociation that maintain that the treatment of clinical dissociation is a core element of intervention with virtually all adult survivors of childhood complex trauma.²⁰

As noted above, CBP's four treatment components include relationship, regulation, dissociative parts, and narrative. Details of each component are described as follows.

Relationship Component

A survivor of complex trauma or childhood maltreatment may have several painful relational experiences. Consequently, a critical part of therapy involves assisting "patients in examining past relationships, drawing connections between their past and present relational patterns, and altering unhealthy relational dynamics in their present life."²¹

In the CBP approach, the therapeutic relationship between the clinical therapist and the patient is the primary mechanism for healing and recovery. The treatment focuses on a collaborative internal experience of the clinical therapist and the adult survivor of childhood emotional abuse (the patient).

Relational trauma requires, and seeks, relational healing; thus, complex trauma treatment should happen within a relational frame. The healing of relationally inflicted wounds occurs within the context of a holding environment, with another

²⁰ Grossman et al., "Treating Adult Survivors: A New Framework," 87.

²¹ Pressley and Spinazzola, "Beyond Survival," 13.

person to witness the client's suffering and to provide support and validation. Adults who have experienced chronic emotional abuse, neglect, and other forms of trauma have generally been deprived of this type of holding relationship.²²

Regulation Component

The regulation component of treatment is the process in which the clinical therapist works with the patient to develop self-regulatory capacity, including awareness of, tolerance for, communication about, and the ability to modulate internal states. The Trauma Center's research indicates

that a complexly traumatized client is a dysregulated client who may express one's self with a pronounced burst of hyperarousal—such as explosive and often fragmented states of rage, terror, or panic. Additionally, dysregulated manifestations may demonstrate more quiet expressions, such as chronic unease, hair-trigger irritability, and surges of shame and loathing of self and others due in part to the inability to self-soothe or restore equilibrium in response to shifts in arousal.²³

When establishing a therapeutic relationship, the therapist must have a solid ability to monitor, manage, and effectively modulate his emotional regulatory system regarding responding to or reacting to the patient's emotional outbursts or withdrawals.

Dissociative Parts Component

Therapy with adult survivors involves bringing the awareness that has been discounted and bringing together that which has been fragmented. Dissociation and fragmentation of aspects of experience and aspects of self are common coping mechanisms for children facing violence and interpersonal deprivation. CBP "consider[s]

²² Hopper et al., *Treating Adult Survivors*, 18.

²³ Hopper et al., *Treating Adult Survivors*, 19.

each person's parts of self, using the client's language to understand the function of each part of self and the degree to which that part is dissociated from conscious awareness.”²⁴

Narrative Component

Adult survivors of childhood emotional abuse and complex trauma have difficulty making meaning of life experiences. Therefore,

Narrative work in CBP includes processing micro-level elements of the trauma, such as specific memories of maltreatment; macrolevel processing of themes, such as the impact of these early experiences on one's ability to trust, hope, or believe, and life narrative and identity construction. As this narrative work is created, the four dimensions of the narrative component are considered: traumatic memory, identity impacts of trauma, engagement regarding trauma narrative, and integration of life narrative.²⁵

CBP helps the patient understand how their chronic difficulties stem from survival-based adaptations developed in response to early life adversity. These experiences are organized into a cohesive, meaningful, forward-looking life narrative that transcends trauma and instills a sense of purpose and hope.

Component-Based Psychotherapy and Doctoral Ministry Project

Scholar and theologian Ian Barbour proposed four models for the relationship between science and religion: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration.²⁶ These models are defined as follows:

Conflict – the belief that science conflicts with religious faith.

²⁴ Hopper et al., *Treating Adult Survivors*, 159.

²⁵ Hopper et al., *Treating Adult Survivors*, 197.

²⁶ Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: History and Contemporary Issue* (San Francisco: Harper, 1997)

Independence – an alternative view holds that science and religion are strangers who can coexist as long as they keep a safe distance from each other.

Dialogue – one form of dialogue is a comparison of the methods of the two fields, which may show similarities even when the differences are acknowledged.

Integration – a more systematic and extensive kind of partnership between science and religion occurs among those who seek a closer integration of the two disciplines.²⁷

Each of these models were evaluated to determine an acceptable model for my doctoral ministry project and foundation research.

Science and theology are two distinct ways of looking at a single reality; both views have limitations. The Bible must be the starting point for spiritual and intellectual revelations. God has revealed in scripture truths central to life, such as wisdom, financial stewardship, parenting, marriage, community, etc. God has not chosen to reveal everything worth knowing while living out a human experience on earth through scripture. Instead, God has made humankind in His image (Gen. 1:26) with free will to discover the truth through reasoning, curiosity, and the ability to decide. The Bible does not provide humanity with all details related to science, mathematics, emotional intelligence, childhood maltreatment, child development, mental and physical health issues, and others. That said, science is a utility created by God through revelation imparted unto His creation, humankind.

Based on the analysis of Barbour's terminology of the theology of nature, which means seeing the truth as one in two revelations, applying the integration model is supported.²⁸ Brian Eck has specifically studied Barbour's integration model in relation to

²⁷ Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 2-4.

²⁸ Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 98.

the discipline of psychology. Eck provided a laymen's explanation of Barbour's manipulative paradigm and it was considered a parallel grouping of the manipulative paradigm. "The manipulative paradigm accepts that some truth exists in each discipline but does not believe that truth from the other discipline is directly admissible into the integration process. In this paradigm, data from the other discipline must be altered to become acceptable data for integration."²⁹ Eck further divided the manipulative paradigm into two distinct types: reconstructing and transforming types. A suitable type similar to Barbour's model is the reconstructing integration process, which "is carried out by taking the truth from one discipline and subsuming it within the truth of the other."³⁰

Thus, the research project, *Identifying Intergenerational Trauma in Women through Education and Empowerment*, utilized an integration model of the relationship between science and faith by taking an approach aligned with the principles of component-based psychotherapy.

Relationship Component

As mentioned in the description of CBP, the therapeutic relationship between the patient and therapist is vital to clinical treatment. In the implementation phase of the doctoral project, the researcher served in a dual capacity both as a facilitator and a participant. As a facilitator, the responsibilities included initiating direct contact with participants, providing details of project objectives, conducting interviews as a follow-up

²⁹ Brian E. Eck, "Integrating the Integrators: An Organizing Framework for a Multifaceted Process of Integration," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 15 (1996): 104.

³⁰ Eck, "Integrating the Integrators," 104.

to pre- and post-training surveys, reading the participants' reflection summaries, and listening to and observing the telling of personal stories by participants.

As a workshop participant (adult survivor), the facilitator openly shared personal stories related to the learnings and disciplines. Self-reflection and self-awareness were important to function effectively as a facilitator and participant. Also, as a facilitator and participant, the need to recognize and understand the defensive coping strategies of adult survivors and the types of interactions that may activate those defensive strategies was critical. The researcher also had to continue ongoing personal therapy, thus ensuring that the facilitator could manage the potential psychological and spiritual reactions that might arise. By serving as a facilitator and participant, the researcher sought to strengthen the relational bond with the workshop participants will be strengthened and establish trust with—essential attributes when providing support to an adult survivor of trauma.

Narrative Component

Treatment models for adult survivors of adverse childhood trauma may vary on when or how to integrate a narrative component of treatment intervention.

In CBP, the core treatment component of narrative involves understanding, accepting, transcending, and integrating traumatic experiences into one's broader life narrative; by making meaning of the trauma and moving beyond the identity of survivor to an identity of one who is engaged in a meaningful life.³¹

The research project was designed to integrate this dimension of CBP by providing participants with opportunities to document their insights, triggers, and learnings through reflection summaries of educational modules on intergenerational

³¹ Pressley and Spinazzola, "Beyond Survival," 16.

abuse, CBP, and the Spiritual Prayer Journal. The workshops encouraged participants to share personal stories and apply disciplines. As the facilitator, the researcher also ensured that support would be provided by a professional associate licensed as a psychologist to participants who may experience emotional triggers or have difficulties making meaning out of their stories.

Component-Based Psychotherapy and Biblical Foundations

The researcher investigated the concepts of intergenerational childhood abuse in the Biblical foundations' chapter concerning Joseph, where an integration model of the relationship between science and religion was applied. The integration model outlined in Joseph's story is aligned with CBP's relationship, regulation, and narrative principles, as described below.

Relationship Component

In Ancient Israel, there were no psychologists or psychiatrists. However, Joseph believed in and worshipped his father's God, Yahweh. God seemingly served as Joseph's therapist and silently moved in Joseph's life through his endurance of childhood rejection, pain, separation from family, and imprisonment.

Regulation Component

For individuals who have grown up in a chronically traumatic and/or rejecting environment, the issue of self-regulation is a key component of treatment. Emotional and physiological arousal often serve as triggers for the fight, flight, or freeze response in the autonomic nervous system.³²

³² Pressley and Spinazzola, "Beyond Survival," 14.

While fight, flight, or freeze responses may help a child to survive abuse, the same behavior in an adult is neither helpful nor connected to the present situation. Regulation in CBP includes tools to assist patients in developing or improving emotional awareness to regulate arousal states.

The Bible does not ascribe any emotional experience to Joseph following his traumatic events. This “suggests the involvement of unconscious defenses and describes a numbed Joseph who was able to move on successfully. However, years later, with the appearance of his brothers in Egypt, Joseph’s emotional reaction emerges.”³³

Narrative Component

Joseph spent thirteen years enduring one disappointment after another before God led him out of the pit and into the palace of Pharaoh. Joseph’s disappointments were blessings, as he acknowledges when he speaking to his brothers in Genesis 50:20: “You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people.” With this statement, it is evident that Joseph understood the purpose of his life story, and the abuse experienced as a child was considered a microcosmic event within the macrocosm of his life.

Component-Based Psychotherapy and Historical Foundations

Christine Courtois and Julian Ford define complex trauma as a traumatic attachment that is life-or self-threatening, sexually violating, or otherwise emotionally overwhelming, abandoning, or personally castigating or negating, and involves events and experiences that alter the development of the

³³ Mann, “Joseph and His Brothers,” 337.

self by requiring survival to take precedence over normal psychobiological development.³⁴

These scholars also acknowledge complex psychological trauma, which

refers to experiences that (1) involve repetitive or prolonged exposure to, or experience of, multiple traumatic stressors, (2) involve harm or abandonment by caregivers . . . some of whom hold a fiduciary duty, and (3) occur at developmentally vulnerable times or transitions in the person’s life, especially (but not exclusively) over the course of childhood, and . . . incorporated within the person’s biopsychosocial development.”³⁵

Significant types of complex trauma include child abuse, mass interpersonal violence, genocide, human trafficking, slavery, natural disasters, large-scale transportation accidents, war, rape, and sexual assault.

Pandita Ramabai, the focus of the historical foundations chapter, experienced adverse effects of trauma from extreme poverty, religious beliefs, a patriarch culture that demeaned women by prohibiting the education of women, and forced child marriages. The historical foundations took an integration approach aligned with CBP’s relationship and narrative principles, as described below.

Relationship Component

Ramabai had a strong relationship bond with her father, Anantshastri Dongre, who served as her educator, spiritual advisor, and life coach. Most importantly, Anantshastri gave Ramabai a chance to study and lead a religious life until she chose to marry, even though allowing her to educate herself was against the caste rules.

³⁴ Courtois and Ford, “Treatment of Complex Trauma,” 25.

³⁵ Christine A. Courtois et al., “Best Practices in Psychotherapy for Adults,” in *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders in Adults*, 2nd ed., eds. Julian D. Ford and Christine A. Courtois (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2020), 63.

In addition, Ramabai had strong influencers of women across the western continents who supported her dream of a residential school for women and girls. Subsequently, Ramabai served as the relational therapist, life coach, and spiritual advisor to the women and girls who were residents of Sharada Sadan, her first residential school, which was later expanded and renamed Mukti Mission. It is clear, both from the positive impact of relationships on Ramabai's life and her continued use of relationship when serving women impacted by trauma, that healing from complex trauma requires a relational dimension of treatment.

Narrative Component

Unlike most Indian women, Ramabai traveled extensively across the continent of India and abroad. She experienced several women-led conferences in which she would invoke her life narrative and the experience of others around her to represent the situation of Hindu women in India. Ramabai understood her struggles and those of other Hindu women living in India. Nonetheless, she recognized how her life was remarkably different from most Hindu women due to her academic education and moved through her internal process to make meaning of her experiences. She collaborated with women globally and leveraged her personal narrative and influence to raise financial support for the residential facilities. She served as an ally for women and girls who resided at Mukti Mission, thus, encouraging the residents to face their trauma experiences using spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Ramabai's use of narrative techniques in caring for women and girls confirm the importance of narrative in healing.

Component-Based Psychotherapy and Theological Foundations

The theological foundations of this study are aligned with CBP's relationship principle. I argued that the relationship between God and humanity is critical to the theology of forgiveness, and that it overflows into person-to-person relationships. As David Stoop explains in his book *Forgiving What You'll Never Forget*, "Forgiveness is important for our sake and our relationship with God. Our ability to forgive flows out of our awareness of our own forgiveness by God. The more we understand how much we have been forgiven, the more we are able to forgive."³⁶

Forgiveness is crucial to each individual's spiritual and emotional health. The process of forgiveness begins with a decision—it is a choice, and it is critical in our lives to receive forgiveness when something has gone wrong and to forgive others when we have been hurt or wounded. The steps of forgiveness are then followed: 1) recognize the injury, 2) identify the emotions involved, 3) grieve what was lost, 4) forgive, and 5) consider reconciling.

Summary

The interdisciplinary field of Component-Based Psychotherapy (CBP), a sub-discipline of psychology, has been explored in this chapter. Psychological theories that address various mental health symptoms, patterns, and diagnoses relating to adult survivors of childhood maltreatment or complex trauma have been analyzed. Further,

³⁶ David Stoop, *Forgiving What You'll Never Forget* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2003), 80.

psychotherapy, with its three phase approach, has been reviewed as a best practice for treating individuals with trauma and psychological distress.

CBP was identified as the interventional framework for adult survivors of childhood psychological maltreatment. CBP, an evidence-informed model, bridges, synthesizes, and expands upon several existing schools or theories of treatment for adult survivors of traumatic stress. CBP utilizes a phased-based approach for complex trauma survivors, which includes four key components: relationship, regulation, working with dissociated aspects of the self, and narrative.

CBP's four principles—relationship, regulation, dissociative parts, and narrative—were defined. Based on the analysis of Barbour's integration model, descriptions were made of how the interdisciplinary theory, overall project, and foundations would be engaged. This integration demonstrated how science, specifically a psychotherapy mental health methodology created by God through revelation imparted unto His creation, can lead to emotional and spiritual healing.

In closing, the CBP interdisciplinary theory is a modern, evidence-based treatment modality for adult survivors of childhood psychological abuse and neglect. These key learnings and the practical tools offered in this chapter will be an integral component of the project development. The next chapter outlines the concept, project scope, methodology, timeline, implementation, and analyses. The previous chapters will impact the project structure, development, teaching methods, and modules to educate the survivors of generational trauma, equip individuals with tools, identify the impact of suffering on their lives, and help them become emotionally and spiritually healthy disciples of Christ.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The previous chapters provide a foundation of evidence related to interdisciplinary and theological practices supporting the necessity, strategic vision, scope, and approach of the project I implemented. This project, birthed from my personal and ministry experience, is a self-discovery and empowerment program in the arena of generational abuse, its impact on adults, and the pathway for recovery. At the core of this project is the revelation that God is present in the midst of His creation's suffering. I conducted a six-week educational program that included a weekly workshop and devotional practices to equip women to identify their intergenerational childhood trauma, theorizing that, as women begin to identify the adverse effects of intergenerational trauma, they may become equipped to apply tools to improve self-awareness, strengthen spiritual growth, and develop interpersonal skills. I pray that as women participate in the project implementation, each will gain profound insight into who she is as God's creation, where God was in her suffering, and the divine purpose of her pain.

Methodology

Project Overview: Statement of Theme

The theme of this project is intergenerational trauma, the transmission of childhood maltreatment experiences from one generation to another without conscious awareness of the past trauma's impact on future generations. Trauma may be passed down from parent to child and other family members, such as grandparents, siblings, aunt, or uncle.

Project Objectives, Scope, and Approach

The project objectives for this research study—Identifying Intergenerational Trauma in Women through Education and Empowerment—were as follows:

- To examine a biblical and historical account of intergenerational trauma.
- To provide educational training on intergenerational trauma and its adverse effects on adult survivors.
- To understand the ACE tool and scoring.
- To identify and describe interdisciplinary treatment modalities and tools to support adult survivors.
- To understand Positive Childhood Experiences and influences on adult survivors.
- To understand the character of God in suffering.
- To learn the difference between divine and human forgiveness and the importance of establishing a forgiveness practice.

With this background, I tailored five steps to comprise a self-discovery education and empowerment program that identifies intergenerational trauma in women. The project approach and timeframe are illustrated below and consisted of five significant steps (Mobilize, Prepare, Assess, Implement, and Monitor) which occurred over sixteen weeks. Details of the significant steps are as follows.

Step One: Project Mobilization (weeks one through five)

- Developed a detailed project work plan.
- Conducted working meetings with professional and context associates.
- Confirmed project objectives, tasks, timetables, outputs, and established project structure with professional and context associates.
- Determined project roles for professional and context associates.
- Identified and secured professional speakers.
- Determined virtual program dates and times.
- Developed email communication, promotional brochures, and flyers.
- Developed participant letters of request and agreement forms.

Step Two: Prepare Qualitative Data Analytical Tools (weeks four through eight)

The personal development program was initiated with the following learning tools: pre/post-training questionnaires, a guided spiritual and reflective journal, interdisciplinary and theological module questionnaires, and a reflection summary. The pre/post-training questionnaires assessed the participants' knowledge of intergenerational trauma, and the interdisciplinary and theological questionnaires evaluated the

participants' knowledge of family history and forgiveness. Finally, the guided spiritual and reflective journal included devotional readings and exercises corresponding to the weekly workshops.

Step Three: Assess Qualitative Data Analytics (weeks four through eight)

The educational and empowerment program utilized a phenomenological qualitative research methodology. According to John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell's *Research Design, Fifth Edition*,

“Qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.”¹

Moreover, Creswell and Creswell state,

In a qualitative project, the researcher will describe the problem that can best be understood by exploring a concept or phenomenon. We have suggested that researchers use it to probe a topic when the variables and theory base are unknown.²

Qualitative research differs from a quantitative method, because it investigates the meaning which participants may ascribe to a particular human problem. Quantitative research is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables.

I applied this approach during the project kickoff virtual meeting by issuing a pre-training questionnaire for electronic completion with an associated confidentiality code. The pre-training intergenerational trauma questionnaire addressed areas that childhood abuse typically impacts. The survey included the following open-ended questions:

¹ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2018), 4.

² Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 104.

- How do you define intergenerational trauma or abuse?
- What type of harm can intergenerational trauma or abuse have upon victims?
- Have you experienced any forms of intergenerational trauma? If so, please describe incidents experienced during your life.
- If you experienced intergenerational abuse, what steps have you taken to heal from the trauma?
- How can individuals who have experienced intergenerational trauma be treated?
- What do you believe is God's stance on abuse?
- What has been your experience with the Church in addressing intergenerational trauma and assisting victims?

The pre-training questionnaire was also utilized as the post-training questionnaire to assess the impact of education on participants' transformative work (see Appendix B).

During the training sessions, related discussion questions were asked.

Supplemental surveys—the Do You Know Scale, ACE questionnaire, and Forgiveness questionnaire—were administered before the Interdisciplinary and Theology workshop.

Additionally, a Spiritual Discipline and Reflective Journal was developed for the participants to utilize in conjunction with each weekly workshop session. The journal provided a flexible structure for the participant to spend time with God to sit quietly and reflect on information shared from each training section on Intergenerational Trauma. The journal included material to guide the participant through the six-week educational program. The weekly devotional themes were based on each training module, from Identifying Intergenerational Trauma in Women, which provided a method of connecting with God, to Seeking His Presence to understand one's past to move forward.

Each weekly devotional study contained five elements: centering prayer, silence and stillness, scripture, a devotional reading, and specific weekly training module questions for completion, which were requested for weekly upload before the next educational session (see Appendix C).

Subjectivity is expected in qualitative research as definitive responses to questions cannot be determined because of the multiple lived experiences of each participant. The qualitative method is seen as the best way to approach this project because details of an individual's emotions and spiritual beliefs actively contribute to the overall responses, which are not relevant in a quantitative method. The prevailing concern of this study involved engaging approaches to contribute toward inquiry, insight, and emotional spiritual maturity.

Step Four: Implement (weeks eight through twelve)

During Step Four, a meeting cadence was established with the professional associates starting September 2022 and with the context associates in January 2023. The context associate is a representative from Sassy Frassy's Executive Board, and professional associates are individuals who have terminal degrees in counseling, mental health, or ministry who provided feedback on the project model, the questionnaires (to clarify language or misleading questions), and the data collection methods to help identify any bias in my conclusions.

Email communications and educational flyers were disseminated to women promoting the education and empowerment workshops on Intergenerational Trauma. Those who chose to participate in the project committed to attending all virtual sessions,

actively engaging in the discussions, and completing requested assignments. Some of the expectations for the participants included:

- Everyone is committed to sharing from their own lives and experiences, recognizing that deeper sharing will come as trust (in each other and God) increases.
- We will do what we can to participate fully.
- We will risk honest, plain talk regarding our own experiences.
- We will listen tenderly to each other and strive for acceptance and understanding.
- We will complete the weekly personal reflections, guided journal entries, and follow-up study.
- We will hold in strict confidence what is said in all sessions.
- Summary: show up, be fully present, pay attention, speak the truth, hold confidence, complete personal reflections and assignments, let go of outcomes, and expect miracles.

Following the registration of participants, the educational program was implemented over a six-week period. A kickoff meeting provided an introduction to the program. The educational workshops were held during the summer of 2023 in a virtual capacity, as outlined below.

Table 2. Workshop Schedule

Week	Session Date	Time	Topic
Kick-off Meeting	June 20, 2023	7:00-8:00pm (1.0 hour)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of Project • Review Consent Form and Pre-Survey Questionnaire
Week #1	July 16, 2023	8:00-10:00pm (2.0 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling the Stories: Biblical Account (Foundations) Intergenerational Abuse
Week #2	July 23, 2023	8:00-10:00pm (2.0 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling the Stories: Historical Account (Foundations) Intergenerational Abuse
Week #3	July 30, 2023	8:00-10:00pm (2.0 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Intergenerational Trauma? • Impact on Adult Survivors • Understanding Your Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Score Treatment Modalities and Tools
Week #4	August 6, 2023	8:00-10:00pm (2.0 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Intergenerational Trauma • Understanding Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)
Week #5	August 13, 2023	8:00-10:00pm (2.0 hours)	Where is God in the Suffering?
Week #6	August 20, 2023	8:00-10:00pm (2.0 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining Forgiveness - OT and NT • The Freedom of Forgiveness, Forgive Others, and Forgiving Self

Step Five: Monitor (weeks twelve through sixteen)

Post-training surveys were distributed to participants for completion during week six. Also, participants were asked to complete a reflection summary of the program addressing the impact of learning material, the applicability of self-directed treatment modalities, and personal stories of forgiveness and transformation. One-on-one exit interviews were also held with each participant to obtain additional information on lessons learned, opportunities for improvement, and areas for modifications, including feedback on instructors' teaching styles and engagement.

The project's success was analyzed according to the participants' understanding of intergenerational trauma in their lives, recognition of transformation and growth,

commitment to apply self-directive tools in areas impacted by trauma, and continual use of the spiritual disciplines learned. When successful, workshop participants were able to report a level of insight and clarity regarding generational traumas, purpose for their pain experienced, and knowledge of forgiveness and its importance.

Implementation

Summary of Workshop Preparation

Email communications and educational flyers advertised the educational and empowerment program to women eighteen years or older who may have been former Sassy Frassy participants or graduated from high school where the non-profit administers services in Kentucky. Thirty individuals were contacted, and an introductory meeting was held with interested prospective participants. Information on the program's objectives, confidentiality requirements, timeframe, training topics, expectations of participants, and frequently asked questions was addressed.

Nine participants registered for the educational program, five of whom provided useable data by completing all of the surveys. One participant was a clergy member. Two context associates also participated in the training program. Two professional associates served as workshop educators—a licensed psychologist and licensed professional clinical counselor. Unfortunately, two participants withdrew from the program following the first session, so their data was excluded from the study. The resulting participants ($n=7$) comprised the study sample size and all data collected for analysis. Table 4 below

provides a demographic breakdown of the seven participants, detailing the participants' ages, marital statuses, educational levels, and religious beliefs.

Table 3. Participants Demographic Breakdown

Identifier	Age	Marital Status	Educational Level	Religious Belief
Participant W#1	33	Divorced	Master	Christian
Participant W#2	33	Married	Master	Christian
Participant W#3	64	Single	Master	Christian
Participant W#4	19	Single	College Student	Atheist
Participant W#5	73	Divorced	Bachelor	Christian
Participant W#6	67	Single	Bachelor	Christian
Participant W#7	64	Single	Master	Christian

Before launching the first educational workshop, I prepared a survivor's toolbox that consisted of a welcome letter, themed workshop scripture adapted from 1 John 4:7–12 that included an affirmation reading titled “You are Beloved and I Am Her,” the Welcome Prayer card by Father Thomas Keating, a wooden prayer cross, a beaded coined purse with theme ‘Beloved’ engraved, rubber key chain with ‘Beloved and I Am Her’ piece imprinted, a devotional book, and a customized notepad. See Appendix A for details of the survivor's toolbox Welcome Letter, the Welcome Prayer, and the “You are Beloved/I Am Her” theme scripture and affirmation reading.

Workshops details

The educational training program was implemented over six weeks on Sunday evenings from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. throughout the summer break in a virtual workshop form. During an evening project kickoff session, a general overview of the project was presented; participants introduced themselves; and I reviewed my bio and role as a researcher, facilitator, and participant. We also completed the required consent form and pre-survey questionnaire. See Appendix B for the United Theological Seminary Consent form and Pre and Post-Survey Questionnaire.

The workshop course content included breathing/centering exercises, the Welcome Prayer, educational modules, video excerpts, lecture-discussion questions, scriptural readings, homework assignments, journaling, and closing prayer. Additionally, weekly, participants were requested to commit a minimum of thirty minutes for three days each week to complete centering prayer, silence and stillness, scripture and devotional reading, specific module lesson questions, and closing prayer. See Appendix C, Spiritual Disciplines and Reflective Journal, for details.

The educational modules were strongly influenced by my theological and best practices theoretical research. The workshop sessions were dedicated to providing education on Intergenerational Trauma through the facilitation of the following core training modules: 1) Biblical Account of Intergenerational Abuse, 2) Historical Account of Intergenerational Abuse, 3) Defining Intergenerational Trauma, Impact on Adult Survivors, and ACE assessment/score, 4) Understanding Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) and Treatment Modalities, 5) Where is God in the Suffering, and 6) Forgiveness Model. The content of modules one, two, five, and six were built from my theological

research of systemic theology, including the theology of the wounded, the theology of suffering, and the theology of forgiveness. The theme of modules three and four was based on best practices from experts in the interdisciplinary study of psychology and the sub-discipline of cognitive behavioral therapy that addresses generational trauma. Below, I have summarized each weekly workshop session and analyzed the attendance and completion of exercises.

Week #1 – Biblical Account of Intergenerational Trauma

The first week's training was on the biblical account of intergenerational trauma, which the story of Joseph explored. The reading of The Welcome Prayer formally opened the session. Then the project objectives, calendar, participant commitments, and meeting etiquettes were reviewed, and the completion of the consent form and pre-survey questionnaire was confirmed. I then facilitated the workshop training by playing the song titled: 'Bag Lady' by Erykah Badu, an urban song that describes relational suffering and trauma. See Appendix D for the lyrics. A definition of generational trauma as the transmission of traumatic experiences from one generation to another without conscious awareness of past trauma's impact on future generations was provided.

The scriptural passage Hebrews 12:1–2 was examined as it biblically underscored the message of the introductory song: the bag of sin has trapped all of humanity.

Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily entangles us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

A video was then shown that provided a general overview of Genesis, broken down into two sections: the first section covered Genesis 1–11, and the second explored Genesis 12–50. The remaining workshop time was devoted to the story of Joseph in Genesis 37–50, in which we examined Jacob's family genogram, the sufferings of Joseph, and Joseph's reconciliation with his family. Throughout the lecture, the following discussion questions were asked:

- Why were Joseph's brothers jealous of him?
- How would you respond if you were told by someone you were jealous of that they would one day rule over you?
- What did Joseph's brothers decide to do to Joseph? What were the different reactions to Joseph's disappearance?
- What was the brothers' reaction when they found out the ruler over Egypt was the identical brother whom they had sold into slavery?
- How was Joseph's response to his brothers the same or different from how you would have reacted?
- How did Joseph's outlook on his situation indicate his belief that God brings good out of evil?

At the close of the lecture, I led the participants in a breathing exercise, in which we stated Psalm 46:10—"Be still, and know that I am God"—after each breathing round. This activity was completed to allow participants to sit in silence, breathing and listening to the Holy Spirit to crystalize any new learnings or any crucial area to remember about the lesson. In closing, I walked through the Week One homework assignment that

included centering prayer, silence before God, devotional readings, reading Genesis 37–50, completion of lesson questions, and journal reflections.

Week One Analysis

During this first educational workshop, a total of nine participants committed to attending the seminar. Six (67%) participants attended, two (22%) were absent, and one (11%) withdrew from the program. Of the six participants who attended Week One, five completed the homework assignments.

Participants willingly responded to the lecture-discussion questions and shared personal stories from their parental and sibling relations. There was an interest in understanding the importance of documenting a family genogram. A genogram is a visual tool to help one look at the history and dynamics of their family over three to four generations. The purpose of the genogram is to become aware of and to break the sinful patterns in one's family of origin to live your God-given purpose in the world. As a homework assignment, the participants were provided a brief genogram video and asked to create their family genogram back to three generations to gain insight into family history. The results from the genogram exercise indicated that of the five participants who completed the homework assignment, four (80%) completed the genogram exercise, and one (20%) did not.

Week Two – Historical Account of Intergenerational Trauma

The second week's session opened with Psalm 46:10, a breathing exercise, and a prayer that I led. Time was spent reviewing the previous week's lecture by addressing the following discussion questions.

- Describe Joseph's story, his trauma, offenders, and reasons for his abuse.
- Were there any areas or times in which Joseph chose to retaliate?
- Where was God amid Joseph's sufferings?
- What aspect of this biblical account of trauma resonated with you? Why?

I spent time briefly summarizing Joseph's story, as the participants initially had nothing to add or clarifying questions. A participant commented on the sibling rivalry and jealousy experienced by Joseph and shared that is the state of her sibling relationship; however, she did not understand the why regarding the behavior and has chosen to keep moving forward with God.

The second training module was on the historical account of intergenerational trauma in the life of Pandita Ramabai. Throughout the lecture, the below discussion questions were investigated.

- Describe the intergenerational trauma identified in Ramabai's life.
- How was Ramabai's childhood experience different from that of other Hindu girls? How did Ramabai's childhood trauma limit her?
- What was Ramabai's calling and life purpose?

At the close of the lecture, I again led the participants in the Psalm 46:10 breathing exercise. I reviewed the Week Two homework assignment that included centering prayer, silence before God, devotional readings, scripture readings, a review of

a video excerpt that described the life of Pandita Ramabai, completion of lesson questions, the Do You Know Scale questionnaire, and journal reflections. A participant volunteered to read the closing scripture and concluded with prayer.

Week Two Analysis

In the second week of training, a total of eight participants committed to attending the second workshop, six (67%) participants attended, one (22%) was absent, and one (11%) withdrew from the program. From the six participants that participated in the session, five completed all the homework assignments, and one participant only completed the Do You Know Scale questionnaire (refer to Appendix E, for details).

Week #3 – Intergenerational Trauma

The third week's session opened with a welcome and introduction to the guest lecturer, a licensed psychologist. I led the workshop session with the weekly breathing exercise and opening prayer. Also, I spent time addressing the previous week's lecture on the historical account of intergenerational trauma by reviewing with the group the following discussion questions.

- Where was God amid the historical figure's traumatic account?
- What aspect of the historical accounts of trauma resonated with you?
- Name a key takeaway from Pandita Ramabai's life that you would apply.
- What new insights have you gained about yourself from the historical/contemporary accounts?

The recap discussion was slow, and it was somewhat challenging to get participants to respond to the lesson's follow-up questions. As a result, I spent time briefly summarizing session two, and participants then seemed to become engaged by contributing their understanding of the historical/contemporary figures.

The third training module, led by the psychologist, was on intergenerational trauma and included definitions and explanations of trauma and ACEs. In preparation for this workshop, the participants were emailed an ACE questionnaire for completion, which included ten questions for the participant to answer about specific incidents that may have occurred prior to the individual's eighteenth birthday. See Appendix E, ACE Score Questionnaire, for details. Objectives of the ACE and Do You Know Scale (part of module two homework assignment) questionnaires were explained, and participants candidly inquired about their results.

Following the discussion on ACEs, the psychologist examined psychological concepts such as attachment theory and discussed the various attachment styles, including anxious attachment style, secure attachment style, disorganized attachment style, and avoidant attachment style. Lawrence Kohlberg's six stages of moral development, principle, social contract, law and order morality, good boy attitude, self-interest, and avoiding punishment were examined. Also, Maslow's hierarchy of needs (physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization) was described. Then the psychologist turned to a discussion of Allostatic load, defining it as the cumulative effects of chronic stress on mental and physical health. The guest speaker stated that allostatic load refers to the 'wear and tear' on the body from life events and environmental stressors. When this burden exceeds an individual's capacity to cope, allostatic overload

may occur. The remaining lecture time was utilized to educate the participants on behavior health and trauma by discussing Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS), patterns of behavior reflective of PTSS (vacant esteem, marked propensity for anger and violence, and racist socialization/internalized racism), common mental health disorders, definitions of mental health and mental illness, and when to seek treatment/therapy.

At the close of the lecture, I used a guided meditation video by Deepak Chopra to assist the participants in relaxing and processing the information learned. I also discussed the Week Three homework assignment. A participant volunteered to read the closing scripture Psalm 139:1–6, 13–16 and concluded with prayer.

Week Three Analysis

In the third week of training, seven participants committed to the workshop, and seven (100%) did attend. Of the seven participants who participated in the session, five completed all the homework assignments, one only completed the ACE assessment, and one did not meet any of the exercise requirements. See Figure 10 for the results of the ACE assessment.

Table 4. Workshop #3: ACE Survey Scores

Participant Identification	ACE Score
Participant #1	4
Participant #2	2
Participant #3	3
Participant #4	8
Participant #5	1

Week Four – Intergenerational Trauma: Treatment Modalities, Tools, and Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)

The fourth week's session opened with a welcome extended for participants and the returning guest lecturer, a licensed psychologist. I used a guided meditation video to assist the participants in relaxing and preparing themselves to process the critical material and also provided the opening prayer. The guest speaker addressed the previous week's lecture on intergenerational trauma by opening the discussion for the group to ask any questions or areas of concern on Week Three's topic, share any insights gained from homework assignments, and volunteer any personal stories related to the previous session.

The recap of the third workshop was slow; however, participants did ask a few follow-up questions. For example, there was an interest in understanding the significance of the ACE score. Another participant shared a personal story of how she can now identify emotional triggers and is interested in learning tools that can assist with managing herself when triggered. A different participant stated she could connect the dots from her family genogram to her ACE score and understand the depth of generational trauma, precisely that of sibling rivalry.

The psychologist also led the fourth training module. She specifically explored intergenerational trauma healing, treatment modalities and tools, and Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs). The critical topics taught included the grieving process after trauma which examined the Kubler-Ross grief cycle: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. She also reviewed common symptoms of traumatic grief and how to cope with grief. A profound exploration of PCEs and the difference with ACEs demonstrated

that PCEs buffer against the adverse lifelong health effects caused by exposure to ACEs.

The psychologist explained that those exposed to ACEs with more PCEs showed better lifelong mental and relational health than those with fewer PCEs.

Following the discussion on traumatic grief and PCEs, the psychologist provided sound practices and tools for personal acceptance and healing, which included secure emotional attachments; positive socialization; telling our history and family story; building on our strength/resiliency, spirituality/faith, religious traditions; and professional therapy, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

The remaining lecture time was utilized to educate the participants on Cognitive Behavior Therapy concepts and self-directive tools. Key concepts were defined and illustrated using applicable techniques, such as those listed below. See Appendix F, Examples of Treatment Modalities/Tools and Descriptions, for additional information.

- Recognizing Cognitive Distortions
- Managing and Communicating Feelings and Emotions
- Automatic Beliefs and Thoughts
- Self-reflection/Functional Behavioral Analysis
- Goal Setting
- Setting/Maintaining Boundaries

At the close of the lecture, I discussed the homework assignment for Week Four. A participant volunteered to read the closing scripture, Philippians 4:6–8, and concluded with prayer.

Week Four Analysis

In the fourth week of training, a total of seven participants committed to the workshop, and six (86%) attended. Of the six participants in attendance, three completed all the homework assignments, and three failed to meet the requirement.

Week Five – Where is God in the Suffering?

The fifth week's session opened with a welcome extended to the guest lecturer, a licensed professional clinical counselor and clergy. A guided meditation video was utilized, and the opening prayer was given. I reviewed the previous week's lecture by opening the discussion for the group to ask any questions, share any insights gained from homework assignments, and share any personal stories related to the session.

The participants eagerly volunteered by sharing the opportunities presented throughout the week to utilize the Cognitive Behavior tools. The group shared examples of their PCEs, which had not been previously considered as valuable relationships for childhood development. Most of the participants had held expectations for family members to contribute to their childhood development and had not examined the positive role of non-family members who influenced personal growth.

The licensed professional clinical counselor led the fifth training module. She provided biblical training on suffering and specifically addressed where God is in the suffering. Participants were challenged at the beginning with three questions:

- Who has not suffered?
- Where is God in suffering?
- If God is with us in our suffering, why doesn't God stop it?

Scriptures were then explored that discussed God as being omnipresent and biblical examples of individuals who suffered, which included Joseph, Job, Jochebed (Moses' mother), Apostle Paul, and Jesus Christ. Following the discussion on biblical examples of individuals who suffered, the guest speaker investigated scriptures (Romans 5:3–4 and Hebrews 2:18) to reveal there is a purpose in experiencing pain and suffering.

The tragic death of Horatio Spafford's family was used as an example. Spafford was a Presbyterian layman, lawyer, and real estate investor in Chicago. During the Great Chicago Fire, Spafford lost his fortune, and, shortly after that, his wife and four daughters died in a shipwreck. After learning of the loss of his family, Spafford penned the hymn, '*It is Well with My Soul*' (see Appendix H for the lyrics). Many people have identified with the lyrics to this song, and it has comforted many who have suffered. The following discussion questions were asked.

- What parts of your broken past would you label 'fiery trials'?
- What have you learned about God from your times of suffering?
- What is the difference between saying "I'm so happy" and "It is well with my soul"?

At the close of the lecture, I reviewed the week five homework assignment, read the closing scripture Colossians 1:9–12, and concluded with prayer.

Week Five Analysis

In the fifth week of the project, seven participants committed to completing the fifth workshop, and all seven attended. Of the seven who participated in the session, four completed all the homework assignments, and three failed to meet the expectation.

However, of the seven participants, six completed the Forgiveness Pre-survey (see Appendix G for details) that was issued in preparation for the final workshop on Forgiveness.

Week Six – Forgiveness Model

I opened the sixth week's session with the standard approach of a guided meditation video and opening prayer. I reviewed the previous week's lecture by opening the discussion for the group to ask questions, share insights gained from homework assignments, and volunteer any personal stories related to the session. The participants expressed how they identified with the lyrics from the song "It is Well with My Soul," and a participant volunteered to sing a verse from the music.

The sixth training module investigated forgiveness by initially examining an example of forgiveness and faith from a PBS religion and ethics video of a mother whose son was killed by a member of a gang. Forgiveness was defined by an understanding of the core concepts of forgiveness: forensic forgiveness, therapeutic forgiveness, and redemptive forgiveness. I explained that, from a theological perspective, the *Mercer Bible Dictionary* defines forgiveness as an act of grace by which God overcomes or removes the barriers of sin that separate God from people, thus making fellowship possible. There are two forms of forgiveness, divine forgiveness, which exists between God the creator and His creation, humanity. The second form is human or interpersonal forgiveness, which God expects His creation to demonstrate to another individual when a person's sin, crime, or poor behavior may cause harm. Then biblical examples of divine forgiveness

were examined. Moreover, interpersonal forgiveness was illustrated through Matthew 6:9–13, Matthew 6:12, 14–15, Matthew 18, and Luke 17.

Following the definition of forgiveness, I outlined the importance of forgiveness first for our own sake and second for God's sake. I explained the benefits of forgiveness, the process of forgiveness, and the six steps of forgiveness, which include recognizing the injury, identifying the emotions involved, grieving what was lost by expressing your hurt and anger, setting boundaries to protect yourself, canceling the debt, and considering the possibility of reconciliation. Time was spent explaining why it is important to forgive others and self as well as to forgive and remember, rather than following the adage 'forgive and forget.' I also discussed the importance of anger in a forgiveness model and understanding how blame shows up in both correct and incorrect ways.

The final area of focus was the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. We discussed how forgiveness is unilateral, while reconciliation requires the participation of another person. Reconciliation is valuable and should be pursued whenever possible, but it is not always possible, for reconciliation requires that the other person be active in the healing process. Forgiveness is an act of obedience and a form of love; reconciliation is an option.

At the close of the lecture, I led the participants in the cognitive breathing exercise, provided details regarding the final homework assignments, post-survey completion, and a reflection summary of personal growth and learnings from all six modules. I also confirmed dates for exit interviews. In addition to the closing prayer, I concluded the session by reading the adapted scripture passage and affirmation: 1 John 4:7–12 “You are Beloved and I Am Her.”

Week Six Analysis

During the sixth week of training, seven participants committed to the workshop, and six (86%) attended. From the six participants that participated in the session, four completed all the homework assignments, one failed to meet the requirement for reflection summary, another was unable to complete the questionnaires, and one did not submit any of the exercises.

Summary of Learning

In this project, I hypothesized that if women 18 years or older received training regarding intergenerational childhood trauma and its adverse effects, they would acquire the tools necessary to begin identifying the abuse they may have suffered. The results from this research study supported the hypothesis.

This hypothesis assumed that participants entered the program with little to no ability to recognize their own suffering. As was evident in the kickoff session and the first workshop when participants were provided a definition of generational trauma, genogram exercise, and completion of the ACE survey questionnaire. These three tools allowed the participants to identify their family of origin patterns, generational consequences, and learning their specific ACE score.

To describe the participants' key learnings, I have included summaries from four participants and outlined them into two distinct categories: a) participants' insights from weekly workshop studies and b) pre- and post-survey generalized comparisons. I selected

these four participants based on the amount of helpful feedback provided on their reflection summaries, with varying levels of fruitfulness.

Insights from Weekly Workshop Studies: Participant #1

Participant #1 is a woman between the ages of 18 and 35. She has been a Christian since early childhood, and her father has been in ministry for over 25 years, serving as a church pastor. Participant #1 is also recently divorced with children. She attended all six workshops and completed the exercises assigned to the six training modules.

Participant #1 described the insights she gained from the intergenerational trauma workshop, specifically Module #3, Intergenerational Trauma, and results from the ACE survey as follows:

This workshop helped me to identify my ACE score of 4. I was reminded to reflect on things that were traumatic for me as a child, and to process how these areas impact my life today. It was refreshing to recognize that I am actually healed in many areas than I have realized. For example, when discussing situations that have been traumatic for me, I had a certain level of peace about them.

Participant #1 found Module #6, Forgiveness Study, to be a fruitful experience. She explained,

This study helped me to understand forgiveness differently. It helped to release the bondage that "forgiveness means forgetting," and it does not. It released me from the bondage that churches and previous pastors have instilled in me, that just because I forgive someone, I have to restart with them over and allow them in my life as if nothing happened. I love that this class confirmed that it is not a commandment to forgive. It is also not required to allow someone back in your life if they have not done their personal work of repentance. Reconciliation requires both parties who have caused hurt and strife to one another, to do their personal work in order to forgive and reconcile. Also, forgiveness is for you first; we can forgive others without the individual knowing; forgiveness is internal

work. Not forgiving is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to be hurt.

She concluded,

She has incorporated contemplative prayer and silence during devotional periods. She has also started the practice of forgiveness in her life. She was tested throughout the project with issues to apply the learnings and not fall into an old practice of demonstrating the same behavior she is receiving back to the offender.

The data would suggest that, as a direct result of this program, Participant #1 grew in her understanding of generational trauma, identified her childhood trauma, and started applying the self-directive tools to begin experiencing healing. Specifically, she began to implement the practices of forgiveness, reconciliation, and remembering the childhood trauma to establish boundaries so that she would not repeat her traumatic experiences.

Insights from Weekly Workshop Studies: Participant #2

Participant #2 is a female between the ages of 18 and 35 who has been a Christian since childhood and attends worship frequently. She is a career woman who is married with children. She, too, participated in all six workshops and completed the exercises assigned to the six training modules.

Participant #2 reflected on the insights gained from Module #1, Biblical Account workshop and genogram exercise, sharing,

I will never forget the genogram exercise. That was very eye-opening for me. I refuse to continue walking around in anger, overanalyzing due to anxiety, fear, and emotional abuse. I have spent much time trying to avoid a physically abusive relationship, that is what I thought was needed so I would not be like my mother and maternal grandmother. However, it is so much more than that!

Participant #2 also described her learnings from Module #3, the Intergenerational Trauma workshop, and the ACE survey as follows:

The psychologist spoke on so many things that were helpful. Her tips on utilizing cognitive behavioral therapy to catch it, check it, and change it are very helpful. Due to prayer and this class, I have been able to identify some triggering behaviors. In order to do this exercise, I had to get rid of the number one thing that affects my mood and anxiety- coffee! I had been drinking it and the level of caffeine I was taking in was embarrassing to admit. With no true anxious, irritable overwhelming thoughts I am now able to feel my feelings. I am also able to articulate and talk to myself using the catch it, check it, and change it. As we worked through these workshop classes, I discovered that a close family friend attempted suicide. Having time with this group, gave me resources such as the suicide assessment that I was able to share with my mom. I recommended that she ask her friend the questions from the suicide assessment and the steps afterward.

Finally, when asked about the tools she gained, she responded,

I have learned so much about myself; in addition, I have unlearned some things about myself too. A primary goal of mine, was to develop an intimate relationship with God, and I achieved that with the weekly homework assignments that included guided devotions, readings, prayer, and silence. This class showed the partnership between spirituality and mental health. Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Lord! Thank you for giving me this class and speaking to my heart.

The data would suggest that Participant #2 grew in her understanding of intergenerational trauma, the impact of her childhood experiences and abuse, and the application of self-directive tools for day-to-day usage as a result of this program, even though this was not her first time receiving training on childhood trauma and ACEs.

Insights from Weekly Workshop Studies: Participant #4

Participant #4 is a young woman between the ages of 18 and 35 who is single and a professed unbeliever. Participant #4 experienced childhood housing and food insecurities for more than two years. She also attended all six workshops and completed the exercises assigned to the six training modules.

Participant #4 found Module #1, the Biblical Account workshop and genogram exercise, helpful, claiming,

My trauma is not just my own, it is shared within my family from one generation to the next. The family genogram helped me realize that my parents were not perfect. On top of gaining new insights about generational trauma within my own family, the Do You Know Questionnaire made me realize I do not know my parents. Obviously that isn't my fault but in some ways it is not theirs either. The root of my trauma comes from my parents. They put me through so much and never showed up for me. I do not remember a time where they did something they should have for their kids. Before starting this study, I blamed them for all my pain and allowed no room for understanding. But now I realize there is more to it than that. I can now understand there was a lot my parents went through within their own lives that I did not know about. Without having the proper resources, guidance, or knowledge they really did not stand a chance. Now even with saying this I still hold my parents accountable for what they did but I do think one day I can forgive them. I do not see things so linear anymore, so black and white - there is gray area now. I am able to consider their feelings and why they did some of the things they did. It has also helped me to understand myself a little more and truly see how far I have come in my own self-healing journey.

Participant #4 recorded her knowledge gained from Module #3, the Intergenerational Trauma workshop and ACE survey, saying,

Learning about adverse childhood experiences has helped me to see how they impact my adult life. With this in mind, using tools like the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Thought Record has assisted me in becoming more self-aware. I often struggle with negative thinking/thoughts. Before having these tools, I would journal or do my best to mentally reverse my negative point of view and see how it is the wrong way to think. The Thought Record provides guidance to write down the specific trigger, how I reacted and description of my negative thinking. By doing this I physically worked through the trigger and was able to write down new ways to think and react. It has helped to address my trauma and specific triggers. I am finding ways to rewrite my brain so I can react to things in a healthy way.

Participant #4 found Module #6, the Forgiveness study, the most impactful. She stated,

My eyes have been opened to so much when forgiving myself and my parents. This module has taught me not to be ashamed of the anger that I have within me. It is nice to hear that it is okay to be angry and that it is a part of the forgiving process. The quote, 'Healthy anger drives us to do something to change what makes us angry; anger can energize us to make things better,' resonated with me. I used to feel guilty and ashamed that my anger was one of the things that motivated me to change my life to break my generational trauma.

This study has given me all the tools I will need to help me on the road to forgiveness. One day, I will forgive my parents. The only thing I do not think I will ever be able to do, though, is to allow them back into my life. Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same thing. I need to forgive them for myself, but they are not something I need or want. I have surrounded myself with good people who are now my family.

Participant #4 concluded her reflection summary with these comments:

I will be honest, I am happy I did this research study and that I was able to participate. But I often struggled with the religious side to it. Before we started I had a pretty negative view about God. When I was younger I would often question him, asking things like 'why would you cause so much suffering?' I could not understand why God would let his children go through such terrible things. I now see there is more to it than just suffering. God is always there with you, guiding you. He is there with you in the suffering and the good times. I realized this during the studies about adverse childhood experiences and positive childhood experiences. Our experiences make us who we are, we had to go through that suffering so we could come out stronger. I can now see God in a more positive light and understand why people believe in him. I am grateful to be a part of this experience, it will be something I will always be proud to have participated in.

Therefore, the data would suggest that, through this program, Participant #4 grew in her knowledge of generational childhood trauma, her understanding of its impact on her life, and her ability to apply some of the self-directive tools and incorporate a practice of forgiveness. This suggests she is on the path of personal growth and spiritual and emotional healing.

Insights from Weekly Workshop Studies: Participant #5

Participant #5 is a female between the ages of 60 and 75 who has been a Christian since early childhood. She attends worship services routinely and serves in the Church. She is a divorced woman with children. She, too, participated in all six workshops and completed the exercises assigned to the six training modules.

Participant #5 found Module #1, the Biblical Account workshop and genogram

exercise, to be impactful, stating,

One thing that was surprising to me in Module 1 was seeing how Intergenerational Trauma played out in Joseph's life, as well as in the life of his brothers. And yet God used trauma in Joseph's journey for good. The line from Module 1 I relate to the most is, "God never discards any of our past for his future when we surrender ourselves to Him." I am reminded of situations I have been in that seemed hopeless at the time, yet when I offered to God, things worked out better than I had hoped. I can apply this in the future, knowing He can use and redeem anything in my life.

Creating my family genogram shed new light on patterns passed down from my grandparents to my parents and me. I can see with further clarity some of those patterns that I want to be more conscious of and make changes not to continue passing on traits and behaviors that are not useful.

Participant #5 recorded the insights gained from Modules #3 and #4, which included the Intergenerational Trauma workshop, ACE survey, and Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs), by stating,

What I learned during Module 3 and 4 on intergenerational trauma was that I was fortunate to have a low ACE score of 1. I can still see how childhood experiences impact the way I behave today and areas where I want to invite God to help me make changes.

Module 4 on Positive Childhood Experiences helped me identify adults who were there for me in a positive way when I was young— people I had not even thought about in years in some cases. Actually, even weeks after the study, people are still coming to mind that I am very grateful to and for."

Participant #5 reported the information learned from Module #6, the Forgiveness study, was beneficial, saying,

The bottom line for me is that true freedom comes through forgiveness. It sets us free from resentments. I heard 'forgiveness means leaving the bitterness behind'. A new insight was the 3 beneficiaries of forgiveness: the other person, God, and myself. There was a lot to think about in this module. As far as applying it to my life, there are questions I want to consider: Do I play the 'blame game', which keeps me stuck in bitterness and resentments? Are there areas where I need to forgive myself? I ask God to help me see the answers.

Finally, Participant #5 concluded her reflection journaling, writing, “I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in this study. I have never looked at Generational Trauma in such depth, and it was eye-opening.” Therefore, the data would suggest that Participant #5 grew in her knowledge and understanding of intergenerational trauma and received self-directive tools for use to continue her spiritual and emotional growth and development because of this program.

Pre and Post Survey Generalized Comparisons

Each of the participants electronically completed the pre-survey questionnaire before attending the project kickoff and introductory session, and the post-survey was disseminated electronically for completion after the Week #6 workshop study. As participants completed the surveys, they uploaded their results electronically to the Alchemer Survey tool to maintain anonymity. I utilized the Alchemer Survey tool to analyze responses and to look for emerging themes across all participants. Question 8 differed between the pre-survey and post-survey questionnaires and is excluded from the generalized comparisons.

Question one asked, “How do you define intergenerational abuse or trauma?” On the pre-survey, participants consistently attributed intergenerational abuse or trauma to someone outside of the family structure. In contrast, on the post survey, participants demonstrated a more accurate understanding of intergenerational trauma by defining it instead as passed down from previous generations within the family of origin.

Question two asked, “Have you experienced intergenerational abuse/trauma? If so, please describe.” The pre-survey results indicated that 90% of the participants had

experienced intergenerational trauma. The post-survey results were like the pre-survey responses; however, descriptions of the abuse included more details of the account.

Question three asked, “What do you believe is God’s stance on abuse/trauma?” The pre-survey results varied among participants. Some struggled with a response and expressed their non-belief in God, while others believed it was God’s way to develop faith in an individual and viewed trauma as a form of sin. The common theme that ran through the post-survey results indicated that participants, as a result of the project, understood that trauma is the result of sinful actions towards another and that God can deliver and heal individuals from intergenerational trauma by breaking the chains that bind to unhealthy behaviors.

Question four asked, “How do you think experiences with trauma may impact one’s relationships, health, employment, finances, and other areas?” The pre-survey results showed that participants consistently described how traumatic experiences would impact most aspects of an individual’s life. The same pattern was revealed through the post-survey responses.

Question five asked, “Do you have a spiritual practice? If so, please describe the frequency of exercise and its importance.” The pre-survey results varied among participants, with 50% indicating they complete meditation and breathing exercises and the remaining 50% indicating they practice periodic prayer and devotional reading. The post-survey responses were, in general, more detailed responses that described a newly or modified developed prayer, journaling, and devotional reading practice, which was noted to have an established rhythm with conscious contact with God throughout the day.

Question six asked, “How would you define forgiveness? If you have experienced trauma, have you forgiven and reconciled with the person that caused the pain?” A few themes emerged from pre-survey results. Participants frequently said forgiveness is for yourself, not for the other person. They also indicated forgiveness requires a level of spiritual maturity. They defined forgiveness as not holding onto resentment. In the post-survey, participants consistently defined forgiveness as the God-given ability to move past the hurt and pain in love, forgiving the person who has wronged you to let off the negative thoughts/emotions that are harbored. They also explained that forgiveness is manifesting and sharing redemptive grace.

Question seven asked, “How can a woman who has experienced intergenerational abuse/trauma undergo healing? Would spiritual or professional counseling be an option?” The pre-survey and post-survey responses were similar. The participants strongly believed women can and should seek spiritual and professional counseling for the healing of intergenerational trauma.

Based on the participants' reflection summaries and responses to the post-survey questionnaires, I conclude that this study improved the participants' knowledge and understanding of intergenerational trauma and its adverse effects and equipped them with tools to identify their sufferings and develop relevant spiritual practices.

Conclusion

In preparation for the project, I was pleased with how each of the components of my research built a solid foundation for the teaching sessions. The study of Genesis 50:15–21, in which the life of Joseph, an adult survivor of intergenerational childhood

trauma, was examined, provided a solid biblical base for my thesis. However, the most fruitful components of the project came from the theological and best practice research. These two chapters provided the theological framework and practical approach for survivors of childhood abuse to achieve a deeper understanding of God amid suffering, the purpose of trauma, and the importance of forgiveness.

The data indicate that the project helped in participants identify generational trauma, understand their adverse childhood experiences, and begin healing those areas that required surrendering to God by receiving new learnings and applying tools for spiritual and emotional development. Overall, the participants appeared to experience incremental breakthroughs throughout the course of the project. However, the most impactful workshop was the forgiveness study, in which most participants reflected on the teachings that dispelled common myths about forgiveness. One participant realized that it was okay for her to be angry about the wrong done towards her, and identified her response as 'resiliency' as she works toward an adult life different than her childhood.

The workshops were held virtually on Sunday evenings from 8 p.m. – 10 p.m. Each session included a centering prayer, a recap of the previous week's training module, a lecture, discussion questions, a review of homework assignments, and a closing prayer. The workshop day and timeslot were determined based on feedback from participants during the introductory session. Although each session was well attended, participation during the recap of the previous week's training module and lecture-discussion was limited. The participants did not share readily, so, as the facilitator, I often called on specific participants and supported them by reminding them of comments made

previously. This lack of self-initiated responses could be the result of holding the sessions late in the evening.

On another note, at the start of the project, I incorporated into the workshop an invitation to share prayer requests. After the third workshop, I discontinued this since no one had shared one. Instead, a general prayer for the participants that often addressed information shared during the lesson and protection throughout the week was offered as the closing prayer. From the exit interviews, a participant commented that she would have liked to have had an opportunity for prayer with participants personally.

Also, the Spiritual Discipline & Reflective Journal was provided in a PDF format electronically to the participants. The older participants reported they preferred a printed version of the journal. To be more inclusive of participants who may not be savvy with computer technology, going forward I would make available a few hard-copied documents. Tracking the participants' completion of guided devotions and journal entries would also be incorporated.

If the project were to be repeated, there are a few things I would reconsider. Instead of holding the workshops virtually over the course of several weeks, I would hold an in-person weekend event spanning a Friday evening and Saturday day session. Additionally, I would combine both Module #1 (Biblical Account) and Module #2 (Historical Account). Based on the participants' feedback, additional time would be provided by the licensed psychologist to focus more extensively on generational trauma, ACEs, and PCEs. During this in-person setting, time would be allocated for individuals to request prayer and receive support if triggered by the information.

As I contemplate my desires for this ministry, I am considering the following areas of focus:

- Condense the training material into a day-and-a-half women's retreat and promote it throughout my ministry network across the Tri-state area of Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana.
- Serve as a keynote speaker for women-focused organizations, including churches, sororities, and other non-profit community groups and provide a 60-minute speech on generational trauma.
- Develop a TED Talk: "Scarred Daughters: Women Suffering from Intergenerational Trauma"
- Develop a weekly Podcast: "Scarred Daughters: Women Suffering from Intergenerational Trauma."
- Possibly publish material as an article and a spiritually-focused self-improvement book.

While the levels of fruitfulness varied between participants in this educational program, through a biblical examination of generational abuse, knowledge of adverse childhood experiences, identification of treatment modalities and tools, discovery of the purpose of one's pain, the establishment of a forgiveness practice, quiet reflection, journaling, and prayer, the participants experienced spiritual breakthroughs and emotional healing. As participants persisted each week to seek to understand new information and hear from God, their needs were met, and freedom from the bondage of anger, resentment, and self-destructive behaviors was experienced.

APPENDIX A
SURVIVORS' TOOLBOX CONTENTS

Welcome Letter



Sassy Frassy

Dear, Participant.

July 8, 2023

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a participant in my research study, which I am conducting as part of my dissertation project in partial fulfillment of my Doctor of Ministry. I am excited to be launching the research study and for you to embark on this journey as a participant in the *"Self-Discovery Education and Empowerment Program that Identifies Intergenerational Trauma in Women."*

This educational program will be held starting on Sunday, July 16th through August 20th over six weeks, which we will meet virtually from 8:00-10:00 pm. We will explore intergenerational trauma in women, specifically studying the biblical and historical accounts of abuse, identifying God in the brokenness, and discussing the impact of childhood adverse experiences on an adult survivor, examining treatment modalities and helpful tools, and exploring the importance of forgiveness in the healing process.

In anticipation of the training program, please find enclosed essential tools that adult survivors should be equipped with when addressing intergenerational trauma such as an inspirational passage, prayer cross, reflection journal, and the program calendar and agenda.

I am excited to meet-up with you via Zoom beginning Sunday, July 16th at 8pm ET. The Zoom details are as follows:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/624262606?pwd=cHJMMHJGTC1Vno5T2NWbHRBMzAxUT09>

Meeting ID: 859 689 2300 and Password: 309849

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at 703-789-7620.

Warmly,

Sheila Hill

Sheila A. Hill, MS, MA, RHIA
Doctoral Candidate
United Theological Seminary
SheilaHill2010@gmail.com

Welcome Prayer

welcome

Welcome, welcome, welcome. I welcome everything that comes to me today, because I know it's for my healing. I welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons, situations, and conditions. I let go of my desire for power and control. I let go of my desire for affection, esteem, approval, and pleasure. I let go of my desire for survival and security. I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person or myself. I open to the love and presence of God and God's action within.

Amen.

Father Thomas Keating
Something Promised

Themed Scripture & Affirmation Reading: "You Are Beloved & I am Her"



You are beloved.

Not an enemy, not a disappointment, not a could-have-been, and not insignificant. You aren't held at arm's length or doubtfully measured for worthiness.

You are His beloved child – cared for, ransomed, welcomed, protected, defended, disciplined, and comforted by a Father who goes before you.

Adapted from 1 Jhn 4:7-12

WHO'S SHE?

She is a daughter. She is a wife, a mother, and she is a best friend. She is a pocketful of light. She is a spark of something good, getting brighter, a dream grown large, the right thing at the right time.

Her spirit is the first thing people notice. Her mind always has a mind of its own. Her heart, though it has sometimes been hurt, her self-esteem may have been bruised, and she has suffered from trauma, she bears a strong resemblance to a daffodil: it always flowers again.

So she wakes with anticipation. She finds new hills to climb. And everyone agrees that the very fact of her in the world means there is still so much good to come.

Who is she? She is me. She is you.

I AM HER.

Adapted from "I am HER" by M.H. Clark

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM AND PRE & POST SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

United Theological Seminary Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I am conducting a research study on intergenerational trauma as part of my dissertation project in partial fulfillment of my Doctor of Ministry at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio. The objective of this consent form is to provide information about the study and to clarify how information obtain will and will not be used. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated.

Research Title:

“A Self-Discovery Education and Empowerment Program that Identifies Intergenerational Trauma in Women.”

Project Director: Sheila A. Hill

Purpose of Study:

This is a consent form for potential participants 18 years or older. You have an option to take part in a research study specifically for women to receive training regarding intergenerational trauma. The problem that is present, most women are unaware of what is intergenerational trauma, how to identify intergenerational trauma in their lives, treatment modalities and tools, and understanding the importance of prayer and forgiveness as spiritual disciplines. If women participate in the Self-Discovery Education and Empowerment program, regarding intergenerational trauma and its adverse effects, then they will acquire the necessary tools to identify the intergenerational trauma they may have suffered.

Requirements for Participation:

You are invited, based on your consent, to volunteer to participate in the six-week project, if you choose, personal contributory interviews on a one on one basis, pre-post surveys, and training module surveys (forgiveness and adverse childhood experiences).

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate via online group training sessions scheduled on Sunday evenings, from July 16 – August 20, 2023 as follows:

Session	Topic	Assignments
Module 1: July 16 @8pm	Biblical Account of Intergenerational Childhood Trauma	<i>Set-aside 30-minutes daily (minimum of 3-days each week) for personal quiet time to include prayer, silence, scripture reading, journaling, and responding to module reflection questions.</i>
Module 2: July 23 @8pm	Historical Contemporary Account of Intergenerational Childhood Trauma	
Module 3: July 30 @8pm	Intergenerational Emotional Abuse & Neglect Treatment Modalities & Tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverse Childhood Experiences 	
Module 4: August 6 @8pm	Intergenerational Emotional Abuse & Neglect Treatment Modalities & Tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Childhood Experiences 	
Module 5: August 13 @8pm	Where Is God in the Suffering?	
Module 6: August 20 @8pm	Defining Forgiveness, Freedom of Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Forgiving Others and Forgiving Self	

Name of participant: _____
Please print first & last name

Please read and initial each section below.
(Your initials indicate you have read and understand each section.)

The Research Project

_____ This project addresses a self-discovery training model for women participants. The research question is: If women participate in the Self-Discovery Education and Empowerment program, regarding intergenerational trauma and its adverse effects, then they will acquire the necessary tools to identify the intergenerational trauma they may have suffered.

Expectations of the Human Research Subject

_____ After my consent to participate in the study, I will complete a Self-Discovery Pre-Training Survey that will provide initial input for the project. Over the six-week training program, I will attend the virtual educational workshops, participate in the group discussions, questionnaires and exercises, and complete weekly reflection questions that are associated with training modules. At the proposed time, I will complete a post-training survey that will provide data for the project.

Consent

_____ I agree to participate in this project as a human research subject. I understand that at any point in this project I can withdraw my participation without explanation. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation as a human research subject for this project.

Confidentiality

_____ I understand that this consent form, pre- and post- surveys and other collected data will be maintained and stored in strict compliance with confidentiality by Sheila A. Hill. All electronic data will be deleted, all reflection summaries and journal entries will be destroyed after the final examination of the dissertation.

Risks for Human Research Subjects

_____ I do not foresee any risks in taking part of this research. I understand that my responses will be covered in anonymity and no one will be able to deduce from my responses my exact identity. If the Project Director chooses to use quotes from my feedback, it will be anonymous. My contributions to the study will be safeguarded from public view for the duration of the study.

Benefits of the Study

_____ I understand that the benefits of participating in this research to society, and possibly the individual human participant, are as follows:

- An understanding of what is intergenerational trauma;
- An awareness of childhood adverse experiences;
- Knowledge of self-directive resource tools;
- An understanding of where is God in one's suffering and the possible purpose of pain;
- An understanding of divine and human forgiveness and personal impact, and;
- Open engaging discussions of intergenerational trauma in a safe place.

____ I agree to join this study and I offer my participation voluntarily and without coercion.

Contact: I am aware that I can contact the researcher, Sheila A. Hill, for answers to questions related to this study directly at telephone: 703-789-7620 or via email at sheilahill2010@gmail.com or sahill1@united.edu.

I have read the contents of this consent form and I have received verbal explanations to all the questions I had and were answered to my satisfaction. I agree that by signing this consent form, I acknowledge that I have read, understand and agree with the terms as a volunteer to participate in this study. Even though this consent form bears my signature, I understand I have the right to withdraw entirely without explanation and at any time.

Signature (Volunteer)

Date

Researcher Signature

Date

Pre & Post Survey Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Also, please note that Question 2 is optional, and is important for data collection, please answer the question if you are comfortable. Note: all surveys are coded so that you can maintain anonymity.

Pre/Post Program Questionnaire

Self-Discovery Educational & Empowerment Program that Identifies Intergenerational Trauma in Women

Demographics: What is your favorite fruit? _____ What is your house number _____

Age: 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75-84 85+

1. How do you define intergenerational trauma?

What is your house number

2. Have you experienced intergenerational trauma? If so, please describe?

3. What do you believe is God's stance on trauma?

4. How do you think that experiences with intergenerational trauma impact one's relationships, health, employment, finances, and other woes?

5. Do you have a spiritual practice? If so, please describe the practice, frequency, and why is it necessary.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Also, please note that Question 2 is optional, and is important for data collection, please answer the question if you are comfortable. Note: all surveys are coded so that you can maintain anonymity.

6. How would you define forgiveness? If you have experienced trauma have you forgiven, forgotten the incident, and reconciled with the person that caused the pain? Describe the experience.

7. How can a woman who has experienced intergenerational trauma undergo healing? Would spiritual or professional counseling be an option?

8. (Pre-Survey): What are you hoping to gain from attending this self-discovery educational and empowerment program for the next six weeks of virtual classwork? (Post-Survey): How did participating in this self-discovery educational and empowerment program meet or not meet your expectations?

APPENDIX C
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE AND REFLECTIVE JOURNAL



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How to Use this Spiritual Discipline & Reflective Journal

- This journal will provide a flexible structure for your time with God to sit quietly and reflect on information shared from the weekly training sections of Intergenerational Trauma. God has built each of us differently. What works for one person will not necessarily work for another, and what worked for you at one time in the past may no longer work for you now. Allow grace – to be the foundation for your spiritual practice.
- This journal includes material to guide you through the six-week educational program. The weekly themes, are based on each training module from: Identifying Intergenerational Trauma in Women Course and provides a means to become connected to Jesus, as we seek Him to understand our past in order to move forward.
- Each weekly study contains five elements: Centering Prayer, Silence and Stillness, Scripture, a Devotional Reading, specific Module Lesson and Module Questions to Consider, and Prayer.
 - Two devotional readings have been selected each week based on the educational theme. **Note** – All referenced devotional readings are from: Peter Scazzero. “Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day.” Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018.
 - As desired, select additional daily devotional readings from Joyce Meyer. “Healing the Soul of a Woman Devotional.” New York, NY: Hatchette Book Group, 2019.

How to Use this Spiritual Discipline & Reflective Journal

1. Centering Prayer, Silence and Stillness. This is the foundation of the weekly Spiritual & Reflection practice. We stop our activity and turn our attention to the Living God. We heed the words of the psalmist to, “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37:7), to “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). We choose to enter into awareness of God’s presence and to rest there in his love.

- Each weekly study begins and ends with **(5) five minutes** of silence and stillness.
- The following are a few guidelines to help you begin entering into silence and stillness.
 - Settle into a comfortable and quiet place. Take a few deep breaths, allowing yourself to inhale and exhale slowly.
 - Begin with a simple prayer – often just one word – that expresses your openness to God and your desire to spend time with him. You might use your favorite name for God, such as Father, Abba, or Jesus. Or you could use a phrase such as, Here I am, Lord.
 - When distractions come, entrust them to God’s care and use your simple prayer phrase to turn your thoughts back to God.
 - Centering Prayer App – Download 

How to Use this Spiritual Discipline & Reflective Journal

- 2. Scripture.** The Scripture selections are intentionally brief and one selection will be identified per each weekly theme.
- 3. Devotional Reading.** Readings are drawn from a wide variety of sources - ancient spiritual writers, poets, monks, rabbis, and contemporary writers, to align with the weekly theme.
- 4. Module Questions to Consider** - Each weekly study ends with homework assignment that relates to the module study objective. All responses to these questions should be uploaded via link received following the Sunday lecture series on the following Saturday by 9pm ET.
- 5. Prayer** - Written prayers have been provided as a supplement to the Spiritual & Reflective weekly journal exercise. You may want to pray the words as written, or simply use them as inspiration and a starting point for your own prayers.

6

Key Spiritual Disciplines & Desires

Disciplines	Desires	Definition	Practice Includes
Centering Prayer	To quiet the heart and rest in God alone	A form of contemplative prayer where the pray-er seeks to quiet scattered thoughts and desires in the still center of Christ's presence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting before the Lord in open attentiveness • Attending to the presence of the Holy Spirit within • Taming scattered thoughts by attending to Christ through the use of a prayer word • Releasing distractions into the hands of God and returning constantly to his presence within
Devotional Reading	To prayerfully encounter and surrender to the living God through attending to Scripture	Hearing of Scripture requires an open, reflective, listening posture alert to the voice of God.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayerfully dwelling on a passage of Scripture • Listening deeply God's personal word to you • Reading for depth, not breadth
Forgiveness	To lean into Jesus' forgiving heart and stop the cycle of vengeance	To forgive is to condemn a wrong, spare the wrongdoer, hatred, revenge and self-righteous indignation by joining them to Jesus' own forgiving heart.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgiving myself for my mistakes and limits as God has forgiven me • Attaching my heart to God's forgiving heart and extending God's forgiveness when I can't extend my own • Unhooking from hate and extending mercy to a wrongdoer • Discerning between forgiveness and collusion in perpetual abuse.
Gratitude	To be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting to live with a grateful heart, cognizant of God's work in my life and my abundant resources.	Gratitude is a loving and thankful response toward God for his presence with us and within this world. Though 'blessings' can move us into gratitude, it is not at the root of a thankful heart. Delight in God and his good will is the heartbeat of thankfulness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayers and songs that focus on God's generosity • Gratefully giving and sharing all you are and have as a sign of your thankfulness to God • Expressing gratitude to others; the habit of saying 'thank you' • Gratefully noticing God's presence and gifts throughout the day.

7

Key Spiritual Disciplines & Desires

Disciplines	Desires	Definition	Practice Includes
Journaling	To be alert to my life through writing and reflecting on God's presence and activity in, around and through me.	Journaling is a tool for reflecting on God's presence, guidance and nurture in daily comings and goings. Journals can be kept regularly or during time of transitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping a written record of God's ways in your life; journals can include a collection of clippings, drawings, collages, articles, poems, quotes, and etc. • Journaling daily or weekly or during significant events and transitions • Recording external or internal journeys or both • Recording prayers, prayer requests, answers to prayers and responses to God in all of this.
Silence	To free myself from the addiction to and distraction of noise so I can be totally present to the Lord, to open myself to God in the place beyond words.	Silence is a regenerative practice of attending and listening to God in quiet, without interruption and noise. Silence provides freedom from speaking as well as from listening to words or music. (Reading is also listening to words.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting a period of time in which you don't speak but isolate yourself from sounds (other than perhaps the sounds of nature) • Driving or commuting without the radio or CD player turned on • Leaving the TV off, spending time in silence with God alone • Exercising without attending to noise; listening to God • Having personal retreats of silence.
Welcoming Prayer	To welcome Jesus into every part of my life, body, circumstances and relationships.	Welcoming prayer is a way to detach from my need to be secure, liked and in control, and attach to the presence of Jesus instead.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing a body scan and inviting Jesus into the tightness, numbness and pain held in the body • Practicing three movements of letting go and one movement of acceptance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I release my need to please people in this situation. Welcome, Jesus, welcome. • I release my desire for security in this situation. Welcome, Jesus, welcome. • I release my need to control this situation. Welcome, Jesus, welcome. • I receive what is. I let go of my desire to change reality. Welcome, Jesus, welcome.

8

The Welcome Prayer by Father Thomas Keating

Welcome, welcome, welcome.
I welcome everything that comes to me today,
because I know it's for my healing.
I welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons, situations, and conditions.
I let go of my desire for power and control.
I let go of my desire for affection, esteem, approval, and pleasure.
I let go of my desire for survival and security.
I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person or myself.
I open to the love and presence of God and God's action within.
Amen.

<https://insig.ht/WO1vgkLYFzb>



The Welcoming Prayer Method

There are three movements of the prayer:

Feel and sink into what you are experiencing this moment in your body.

“WELCOME” what you are experiencing this moment in your body as an opportunity to consent to the Divine Indwelling.

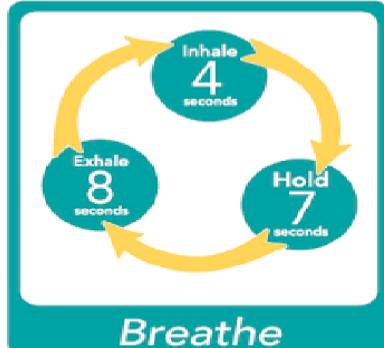
Let go by saying “I let go of my desire for security, affection, control and embrace this moment as it is.”

9

Be Still

Opening Ritual

Breathing Exercise



The diagram illustrates a breathing technique in a circular flow. It consists of three teal circles arranged in a triangle. The top circle is labeled 'Inhale 4 seconds'. The bottom-left circle is labeled 'Exhale 8 seconds'. The bottom-right circle is labeled 'Hold 7 seconds'. Yellow arrows indicate the clockwise flow between the circles. Below the circles, the word 'Breathe' is written in a large, bold, white font.

Psalm 46:10

- **Be still, and know that I am God.**
- **Be still and know.**
- **Be still.**
- **Be.**

Repeat Breathing Technique 4xs. After each breathe round follow the **Be Still** prayer by stating a word or more of Psalm 46:10 - *Be still, and know that I am God.*

10

Week 1: Biblical Account Study

Centering Prayer, Silence/Stillness before God - spend 5 minutes

Scripture - Genesis 50:15, 19-21

"When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrong we did to him? His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. We are your slaves, they said. But Joseph said to them, Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them."

Devotional - #1

Joseph was born into a family characterized by great brokenness and sadness. Lying, jealousy, secrecy, and betrayal visit upon Joseph's young life, and he spent thirteen years wrongly imprisoned and a total of 22 years before he was reconciled with his betraying brothers.

Nonetheless, Joseph was able to observe the large, loving hand of God through all his setbacks and disappointments. In doing so, he affirmed that God mysteriously leads us into his purposes through darkness and obscurity. God is the Lord God Almighty who has all history in his grip, working in ways that are mostly hidden to us on earth. Joseph understood that in all things God is at work - in spite of, through, and against all human effort - orchestrating his purposes.

God never discards any of our past for his future when we surrender ourselves to him. He is the Lord! Every mistake, sin, and detour we take in the journey of life is taken by God and becomes his gift for a future blessing when we surrender ourselves to him.

It is important for us to recognize that Joseph did not deny his past but trusted in God's goodness and love, even when circumstances went from bad to worse.

12

Week 1: Biblical Account Study

Module Exercises & Questions to Consider

Read Genesis 37-50

- Make a list of all the good things Joseph did for his brothers.
- Where were any areas or time which Joseph chose to retaliate?

Journal Reflections

- Watch Genogram video - <https://youtu.be/bVqmukYhF2A?t=1>
- Create your family genogram going back to three generations (grandparents, parents, and you). What insights did you discover about your family?
- This week write down those experiences, which God has given you both today and over the years that you recognize it was God who protected you.
- What new insights have you gained about yourself during this training session?

Upload Responses Electronically by Saturday @ 9pm ET

13

Week 1: Biblical Account Study

Prayer - #1

Dear Father, I affirm with Joseph that you sovereignly placed me into my family, my culture, and my present circumstances. I cannot see all that you see, but I ask you to show me how, like Joseph, I can rest in your love and power - even when I can't see any good that you might be doing. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (5 minutes)

14

Week 2: Historical Account Study

Centering Prayer, Silence/Stillness before God - spend 5 minutes

Scripture - 1 Samuel 16:6-7

"When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord. But the Lord said to Samuel, Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Devotional - #1

Chaim Potok, in his novel *The Chosen*, tells the story of a friendship between two boys growing up in Brooklyn, New York. Danny is a strict Hasidic Jew, and Reuven is a conservative Jew. Danny's father is the leader of a Hasidic community and raises his son in silence. He never speaks to him directly.

Danny is hurt and confused. He cannot understand why his father is so distant and afflicts him with so much pain. At the end of the novel, Danny's father explains that he did it for his as an act of love.

Danny later reflects on the painful experience: "My father never talked to me, except when we studied together. He taught me with silence. He taught me to look into myself, to find my own strength, to walk inside myself in company with my soul."

In the book, Danny discovers that the suffering he experienced had a good outcome. "One learns of the pain of others by suffering one's own pain, by turning inside oneself, by finding one's own soul. And it is important to know of pain. It destroys our self-pride, our arrogance, and our indifference toward others. It makes us aware of how frail and tiny we are and of how much we must depend upon the Master of the Universe."

In reading 1 Samuel 16, one has to wonder what life was like for David as the youngest of seven sons. What did he learn from being considered invisible, not only by his brothers, but his father as well? How might this experience have helped to shape his character so that he is later called "a man after God's own heart"?

17

Week 2: Historical Account Study

Module Exercises & Questions to Consider

Watch Un-remarkable Women Video

https://youtu.be/p_u14hYeBsA

Read Psalm 91

- What do you think it means to dwell in the secret place of the Most High? What would this look like in your life?
- How have you seen the Lord take care of you during your trouble? How can you hide in Him when you still don't have the answer to all of your questions?
- Have you ever felt not just overwhelmed by your problems, but afraid of them? How does this passage give you courage?

Read Romans 12:9-21

- How does this response seem counterintuitive to the way we might want to respond to our enemies?
- How is it effective in terminating the cycle of sin in which we might find ourselves?
- How would living out this passage change the way you act toward others? How could it possible change others' hearts?

Journal Reflections

- What are a few key take-aways about Pandita Ramabai's life that you can apply?
- What new insights have you gained about yourself from this training session?
- Complete Do You Know Scale questionnaire.

Upload Responses Electronically by Saturday @ 9pm ET

18

Week 2: Historical Account Study

Module Exercises & Questions to Consider Complete Do You Know Scale questionnaire.

1. Do you know how your parents met? Y/N
2. Do you know where your mother grew up? Y/N
3. Do you know where your father grew up? Y/N
4. Do you know where some of your grandparents grew up? Y/N
5. Do you know where some of your grandparents met? Y/N
6. Do you know where your parents were married? Y/N
7. Do you know what went on when you were being born? Y/N
8. Do you know the source of your name? Y/N
9. Do you know some things about what happened when your brothers or sisters were being born? Y/N
10. Do you know which person in your family you look most like? Y/N
11. Do you know which person in the family you act most like? Y/N
12. Do you know some of the illnesses and injuries that your parents experienced when they were younger? Y/N
13. Do you know some of the lessons that your parents learned from good or bad experiences? Y/N
14. Do you know some things that happened to your mom or dad when they were in school? Y/N
15. Do you know the national background of your family (such as English, German, Russian, etc.)? Y/N
16. Do you know some awards that your parents received when they were young? Y/N
17. Do you know some of the jobs that your parents had when they were young? Y/N
18. Do you know the names of the schools that your mom went to? Y/N
19. Do you know the names of the schools that your dad went to? Y/N
20. Do you know about a relative whose face "froze" in a grumpy position because he or she did not smile enough? Y/N

Score: Total number answered Y = _____

Week 2: Historical Account Study

Prayer - #1

Father, may the pains I experience in life kill the things that need to die in me - arrogance, pride, and indifference to others. Help me, daily, to see my frailty and how dependent I am on you, the Master of the Universe. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (5 minutes)

Week 3: Intergenerational Trauma (ACEs) Study

Centering Prayer, Silence/Stillness before God - spend 5 minutes

Scripture - Romans 11:33-36

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them? For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."

Devotional - #1

A mature spirituality requires that you go through the pain of the Wall - or, as the ancients called it, 'the dark night of the soul.' Just as a physical wall stops us from moving ahead, God sometimes stops us in our spiritual journey through a spiritual Wall in order to radically transform our character. Often, we are brought to the Wall by circumstances and crises beyond our control.

Regardless of how we get there, every follower of Jesus at some point will confront the Wall. Failure to understand and surrender to God's working in us at the Wall often results in great long-term pain, ongoing immaturity, and confusion.

Our experience at the wall can be fruitful in providing a greater appreciation for what I call 'holy unknowing' or mystery. This expands our capacity to wait on God when everything inside us is saying, "Do something!"

There is an old story about a wise man living on one of China's vast frontiers. One day, for no apparent reason, his son's horse ran away and was taken by nomads across the border. Everyone tried to offer consolation for the man's bad fortune, but his father, a wise man, said, "What makes you so sure this is not a blessing?"

Their household was made richer by this fine horse the son loved to ride, but one day he fell off his horse and broke his hip. Once again, everyone offered their consolation for his bad luck, but his father said, "What makes you so sure this is not a blessing?"

A year later, nomads invaded, and every able-bodied man was required to take up his bow and go into battle. The Chinese families living on the border lost nine out of every ten men who went to fight. Only because the son was lame did the father and son survive to take care of each other.

Often, what appears to be success or a blessing is actually a terrible thing; what appears to be a terrible event can turn out to be a rich blessing.

Week 3: Intergenerational Trauma (ACEs) Study

Module Exercises & Questions to Consider

Read Psalm 139

- How does this psalm reinforce the belief that God has been involved in your life from the very beginning?

Journal Reflections

- What is your ACE score? How are adverse experiences impacting your adult life?
- What do you know now about what has been passed down in your family?
- What new insights have you gained about yourself from this lesson?

Upload Responses Electronically by Saturday @ 9pm ET

Week 3: Intergenerational Trauma (ACEs) Study

Prayer - #1

Father, your ways are unsearchable and beyond understanding. Help me to put my trust in you and not in my circumstances. In your presence, I am silenced. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (5 minutes)

25

Week 4: Intergenerational Trauma (PCEs) Study

Centering Prayer, Silence/Stillness before God - spend 5 minutes

Scripture - Job 2:7-10

"So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. Then Job took a pieces of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die! He replied, You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble? In all this, Job did not sin in what he said."

Devotional

Jonathan Edwards, in a famous sermon on the book of Job, noted that the story of Job is the story of us all. Job lost everything in one day: his family, his wealth, and his health. Most of us experience our losses more slowly – over the span of a lifetime – until we find ourselves on the door of death, leaving everything behind.

"Catastrophic loss by definition precludes recovery. It will transform us or destroy us, but it will never leave us the same. There is no going back to the past. It is not therefore true that we become less through loss unless we allow the loss to make us less, grinding our soul down until there is nothing left. Loss can also make us more. I did not get over the loss of my loved ones; rather, I absorbed the loss into my life, until it became part of who I am. Sorrow took up permanent residence in my soul and enlarged it. One learns the pain of others by suffering one's own pain, by turning inside oneself, by finding one's own soul. However painful, sorrow is good for the soul. The soul is elastic, like a balloon. It can grow larger through suffering. – (Jerry Sittser)

27

Week 4: Intergenerational Trauma (PCEs) Study

Module Exercises & Questions to Consider

Read Psalm 23

- Considering your present circumstances, what would be a green pasture that would give you rest? What would restore your soul?
- What is the job of the shepherd? How does this aspect of God's character make you trust Him more?
- What represents the Lord's rod and staff to you?
- What is your favorite promise from the last two verses of Psalm 23? Why do these words especially speak to you?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

- Think of one blessing that has come out of your trauma, describe it and praise God for it.

Journal Reflections

- What actions have you taken or plan to take for healing? Have you considered receiving support from a spiritual counselor or professional health counselor? Why? Or Why not?
- Reflect on this week's lecture and identify 2-3 insights which resonated and you plan to put into practice or explore further.
- This week reflect and write down those positive childhood experiences you had. How have these experiences aided your well-being?

• **Upload Responses Electronically by Saturday @ 9pm ET**

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Week 5: Where Is God in the Suffering? Study

Centering Prayer, Silence/Stillness before God - spend 5 minutes

Scripture - Psalm 139:13-16

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

Devotional - #1

We are sinners who desperately need forgiveness and a Savior. At the same time, God created us in his image, knit each of us together in our mother's womb with enormous care, and chose us for a special purpose on earth. Parker Palmer captured the wonder of Psalm 139:

"Vocation does not come from a voice 'out there' calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice 'in here' calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God."

It is a strange gift, this birthright of self. Accepting it turns out to be even more demanding than attempting to become someone else! I have sometimes responded to that demand by ignoring the gift, or hiding it, or fleeing from it, or squandering it – and I think I am not alone. There is a Hasidic tale that reveals, with amazing brevity, both the universal tendency to want to be someone else and the ultimate importance of becoming one's self. Rabbi Zusya, when he was an old man, said, 'In the coming world, they will not ask me: Why were you not Moses? They will ask me: Why were you not Zusya?'

32

Week 5: Where is God in the Suffering? Study

Module Exercises & Questions to Consider

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 -Spend some time in prayer telling the Lord how you feel about everything you have gone through. Be completely honest with Him; God can handle it.

Ask God to help you find the silver lining in your suffering. If you have already found the silver lining, thank Him for His provision and wisdom. Think of those blessings that came out of your trials, and write them down and praise God for it.

- Do you believe that God has a purpose for your pain? If so, do you know what is the purpose? What is your life purpose? Does the knowing give you hope?

Listen or read the lyrics of the song "It is Well with My Soul." Think about what the songwriter was going through as he wrote these lyrics. Write out your feelings after hearing/reading the lyrics. How do you identify with the words? Does the message give you hope?

- Complete the Forgiveness Questionnaire.

Upload Responses Electronically by Saturday @ 9pm ET

33

Week 5: Where is God in the Suffering? Study

Prayer - #1

Lord, I come this day inviting you to cut those deeply entrenched chains, chains of generational trauma, brokenness, and grief that keeps me from being faithful to my true self in Christ. In doing so, may my life be a blessing to many.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (5 minutes)

34

Week 6: Forgiveness Study

Centering Prayer, Silence/Stillness before God - spend 5 minutes

Scripture - Genesis 45:4-7

"Then Joseph said to his brothers, Come close to me. When they had done so, he said, I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance."

Devotional - #1

Most of us resist remembering and feeling the hurt and pain of our past. It can feel like an abyss that might swallow us up. We can wonder if we are only getting worse. Yet Joseph wept repeatedly when he reunited with his family. In fact, Scripture relates that he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him (Genesis 45:2).

Joseph did not minimize or rationalize the painful years of his life. He could have destroyed his brothers in anger. Instead, out of the honest grieving of his pain, he genuinely forgave the brothers who had betrayed him, and was able to bless them. Joseph was able to discern that God had sent him ahead to Egypt to save his brothers' lives by a great deliverance (Genesis 45:7).

How did Joseph forgive his brothers? Joseph had developed a secret history over a long period of time in his relationship with God. His whole life was structured around following the Lord God of Israel. Then, when the moment came for him to make a critical decision, he was ready. He took leadership of his family - and continued to the end of his days - providing for them financially, emotionally, and spiritually.

36

Week 6: Forgiveness Study

Module Exercises & Questions to Consider

- **Complete post survey**
- **Read Matthew 18:21-35.** - What does Jesus say about how many times we should forgive? How many times do we find ourselves playing the part of the unmerciful servant, even though we have accepted God's forgiveness?
- What is the relationship between love and forgiveness?
- **Read Luke 6:42.** - Examine your life, do you have anything about which you need to repent of before you approach someone else about their wrongdoing?
- Who does your withholding of forgiveness affect and how? What are some excuses you have given yourself for withholding forgiveness?
- Write a letter to someone whom you have formerly blamed for your trauma, pain, and suffering. Tell the person that caused your harm that you forgive them. If you do not feel ready to send the letter, keep it as a reminder of the step you made towards healing.
- What areas of your life require forgiveness? What steps have you taken this week to move toward forgiveness?
- How do you practice self-forgiveness?
- Reflect on this week's lecture and identify 2-3 insights which resonated and you plan to put into practice or explore further.

Upload Responses Electronically by Saturday @ 9pm ET

37

Week 6: Forgiveness Study

Prayer - #1

Lord, lead me through the process of grieving and healing that I might offer genuine kindness and forgiveness to those who have not been kind to me. Help me, like Joseph, to join with you to become a blessing to many other people.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (5 minutes)

36

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APPENDIX D
“BAG LADY” LYRICS BY ERKAH BAYDAU

Bag Lady
(Lyrics)

Bag lady, you gon' hurt your back
 Dragging all them bags like that
 I guess nobody ever told you
 All you must hold on to
 Is you, is you, is you
 One day all them bags gon' get in your way
 One day all them bags gon' get in your way
 I said one day all them bags gon' get in your way
 One day all them bags gon' get in your way
 So pack light
 Pack light
 Pack light
 Pack light
 Ooh, ooh
Bag lady, you gon' miss your bus
 You can't hurry up 'cause you got too much stuff
 When they see you're comin', niggas take off
 runnin'
From you, it's true, oh, yes they do
One day he gon' say, "You're crowding my space"
One day he gon' say, "You're crowding my space"
I said one day he gon' say, "You're crowding my space"
One day he gon' say, "You're crowding my space"
 So pack light
 Pack light
 Pack light
 Ooh, ooh
Girl, I know sometimes it's hard
And we can't let go

Oh, when someone hurts you, oh, so bad inside
 You can't deny it, you can't stop crying
 So, oh, oh, oh
 If you start breathing, yeah
 You won't believe it, yeah
 You'll feel so much better, so much better, baby
 Bag lady
 Let it go, let it go, let it go, let it go
 Ooh, ooh
 Girl, you don't need it
 Betcha love can make it better
 Betcha love can make it better
 Betcha love can make it better
 Need someone to love you right
 Betcha love can make it better
 (I betcha love, I betcha love)
 Betcha love can make it better
 (I betcha love, betcha love)
 Betcha love can make it better
 (Betcha love, I betcha love, oh)
 Betcha love can make it better
 Betcha love can make it better
 Bag lady, hmm
 Let it go, let it go, let it go, let it go
 Girl, you don't need that
 Hmm

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APPENDIX E

DO YOU KNOW SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE & ACE SCORE QUESTIONNAIRE

Do You Know Scale Questionnaire

1. Do you know how your parents met? Y/N
2. Do you know where your mother grew up? Y/N
3. Do you know where your father grew up? Y/N
4. Do you know where some of your grandparents grew up? Y/N
5. Do you know where some of your grandparents met? Y/N
6. Do you know where your parents were married? Y/N
7. Do you know what went on when you were being born? Y/N
8. Do you know the source of your name? Y/N
9. Do you know some things about what happened when your brothers or sisters were being born? Y/N
10. Do you know which person in your family you look most like? Y/N
11. Do you know which person in the family you act most like? Y/N
12. Do you know some of the illnesses and injuries that your parents experienced when they were younger? Y/N
13. Do you know some of the lessons that your parents learned from good or bad experiences? Y/N
14. Do you know some things that happened to your mom or dad when they were in school? Y/N
15. Do you know the national background of your family (such as English, German, Russian, etc.)? Y/N
16. Do you know some awards that your parents received when they were young? Y/N
17. Do you know some of the jobs that your parents had when they were young? Y/N
18. Do you know the names of the schools that your mom went to? Y/N
19. Do you know the names of the schools that your dad went to? Y/N
20. Do you know about a relative whose face "froze" in a grumpy position because he or she did not smile enough? Y/N

Score: Total number answered Y = _____

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Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Also, please note that Note: all surveys are coded so that you can maintain anonymity.

ACE Questionnaire

Self-Discovery Educational & Empowerment Program that Identifies Intergenerational Trauma in Women

Demographics: What is your favorite fruit? _____ What is your house number _____

Age: 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75-84 85+

Prior to your 18th birthday:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often**...

Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?

OR

Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?

Yes No

2. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often**...

Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?

OR

Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?

Yes No

3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you **ever**...

Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?

OR

Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?

Yes No

4. Did you **often or very often** feel that ...

No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?

OR

Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?

Yes No

5. Did you **often or very often** feel that ...

You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?

OR

Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

Yes No

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Also, please note that Note: all surveys are coded so that you can maintain anonymity.

6. Was a biological parent **ever** lost to you through divorce, abandonment, or other reason ?

Yes **No**

7. Was your mother or stepmother:

Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?

OR

Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?

OR

Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

Yes **No**

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?

Yes **No**

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill or did a household member attempt suicide?

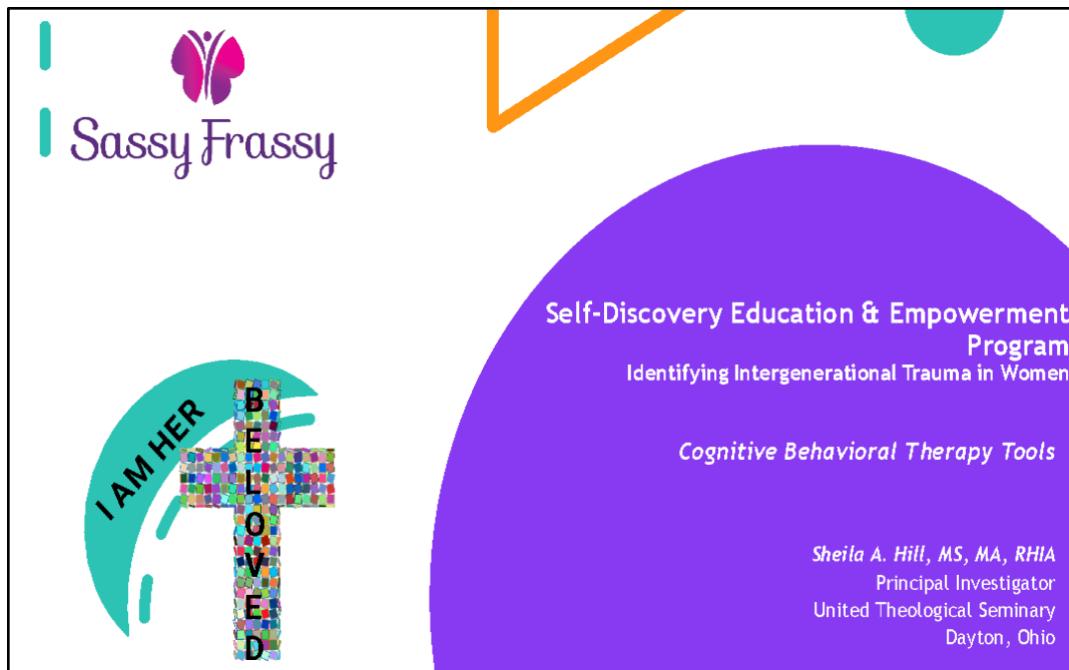
Yes **No**

10. Did a household member go to prison?

Yes **No**

APPENDIX F

EXAMPLES OF SELF-DIRECTED TREATMENT MODALITIES/TOOLS



I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.
John 10:10b

**Professional Counseling/
Therapy**

You Matter!

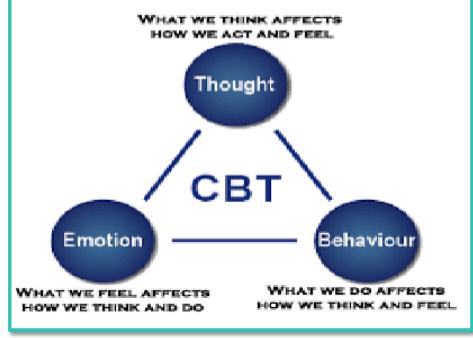
Healthy/Authentic Self

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use talents and abilities effectively and productively • Enjoy challenges/takes pleasure in accomplishments • Find meaning in belonging to a larger community • Empathetic in responding to other people's needs and feelings • Appears to have come to terms with painful experiences from the past • Can express self well in words/manage emotions • Tries to live up to a moral and ethical standards • Approach problems in novel ways (is creative) • Is capable of hearing information that is emotionally threatening or challenges your beliefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to be energetic and outgoing • Healthy balance between work/home/other interests • Is psychologically insightful (able to understand self and others) • Able to find satisfaction in the pursuit of short term and long term goals • Able to form close and lasting friendships characterized by mutual support and sharing of experiences • Appears comfortable in social situations • Finds contentment in life activities • Appreciate and responds well to humor
--	--

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WHAT WE THINK AFFECTS HOW WE ACT AND FEEL



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SIGNS TO LOOK FOR:

- Negative thinking**
- Significant changes in behaviors**
- Extreme/Inappropriate emotional reactions**

July 2019 - 3





**Group Activity Time:
Common Beliefs and
Cognitive Distortions**

July 2019 - 4



**Cognitive Behavior
Therapy
Concepts**

- RECOGNIZING COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS
- MANAGING AND COMMUNICATING YOUR FEELINGS/EMOTIONS
- AUTOMATIC BELIEFS/THOUGHTS
- SELF REFLECTION/FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS
- GOAL SETTING
- SETTING/MAINTAINING BOUNDARIES

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**COGNITIVE
BEHAVIOR
TOOLS**



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Exercise 10 - Cognitive Distortions

The following list of common cognitive distortions can help you to identify, label and pre-empt your own thinking process errors:

1	Catastrophising: Automatically assuming the worst possible outcome.	1
2	Polarised Thinking: Viewing things in absolute or black and white terms.	2
3	Over-generalising: Making sweeping inferences based on a single negative event.	3
4	Negative Filter: Focusing on the negatives and ignoring or discounting the positives.	4
5	Jumping to Conclusions: Drawing conclusions without checking the facts.	5
6	Mind-Reading: Deciding what people are thinking and feeling without any real evidence.	6
7	Emotional Reasoning: Interpreting feelings as a factual judgments.	7
8	Musts / Shoulds: Expressing wishes and preferences as rigid demands.	8
9	Labeling: Using global labels to describe a person based on a single characteristic or situation.	9
10	Blaming: Automatically attributing personal blame or responsibility to self or others.	10
11	Perfectionistic Thinking: Demanding unhelpful standards of exactitude and viewing anything less than 100% as a failure.	11
12	Comparing: Devaluating self-worth by negative comparison with others.	12
13	Change Fallacy: Assuming that things should always change to make us happy or suit our needs.	13
14	Control Fallacy - Assuming we are powerless / victimised if we are not in control.	14
15	Fairness Fallacy - Expecting everything to be measured in fairness and showing resentment when it doesn't work out.	15
16	Reward Fallacy - Expecting sacrifice and self-denial to pay off and feeling bitterness when the reward doesn't happen.	16

Make a note of the common thinking errors that apply to you, so that you can readily spot them when you are caught up in unhelpful thinking processes. The following section of the workbook completes our trip around the Cognitive Triangle by looking at perspective, taking and how we relate to our thoughts.

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COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR TOOLS



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Exercise 12 – The CBT Thought Record

Situation / Trigger	Initial Reaction	Negative Automatic Thoughts	Supporting Evidence	Opposing Evidence	Balanced Alternative Thought	Outcome / Learning	
I didn't get the job I wanted after putting in a lot of time and effort preparing for the interview	Angry 80% Hopeless - 90%	This job should have been mine - 100%	I didn't get the job.	I was encouraged to apply for the job.	I am disappointed that I didn't get the job, but I can accept that this is just one situation - 80%	Feeling disappointed, but I can accept the experience - 20%	
		It's not fair and I have been cheated - 85%	I received feedback about what I had not done well in the interview.	I have been appointed to jobs in the past.	Interviews are tricky and it's difficult to know what they are looking for - 85%	The other person may have been better suited - 85%	I noticed that my initial reaction was to automatically feel rejected, unfairly treated and to assume that the world is against me.
		There is no point even trying - 80%	I have been appointed to jobs in the past.	I am respected, well paid and valued in my current role.	I gained some valuable experience and I am glad that I took the chance to apply - 90%	I can preempt my tendency to blame myself / others when things don't turn out as expected.	
		I am completely useless - 95%	I am completely useless trying again and I should just accept that I am stuck - 75%				

What do I notice about my thoughts? Is this a fairly accurate logical and helpful interpretation? What is a more realistic and helpful assessment? How would I objectively judge this if it was affecting somebody else? How can I see this differently? Is one day/week/month? Is the next person? Is the situation? Is the way that I am thinking about the situation?

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COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR TOOLS



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Exercise 12 – The CBT Thought Record

Situation / Trigger	Initial Reaction	Negative Automatic Thoughts	Supporting Evidence	Opposing Evidence	Balanced Alternative Thought	Outcome / Learning
I didn't get the job I wanted after putting in a lot of time and effort preparing for the interview	Angry 80% Hopeless - 90%	This job should have been mine - 100%	I didn't get the job.	I am disappointed that I didn't get the job.	Feeling disappointed, but I can accept that this is just one situation - 80%	Feeling disappointed, but I can accept that this is just one situation - 80%
		I'm unfair and I have been cheated - 85%	I received positive feedback following the interview.	I indicated that my initial reaction was actually quite helpful and didn't fully take into account the feedback I received.	I indicated that my initial reaction was actually quite helpful and didn't fully take into account the feedback I received.	I indicated that my initial reaction was actually quite helpful and didn't fully take into account the feedback I received.
		There is no point even trying - 80%	I have been appointed to jobs in the past.	Interviews are tricky and it's difficult to know what they are looking for - 85%	Interviews are tricky and it's difficult to know what they are looking for - 85%	Interviews are tricky and it's difficult to know what they are looking for - 85%
		I am completely useless - 95%	I am completely useless trying again and I should just accept that I am stuck - 75%	I gained some valuable experience and I am glad that I took the chance to apply - 90%	I can preempt my tendency to blame myself / others when things don't turn out as expected.	I can preempt my tendency to blame myself / others when things don't turn out as expected.

What do I notice about my thoughts? Is this a fairly accurate, logical and helpful interpretation? What is a more realistic and helpful assessment? How would I objectively judge this if it was affecting somebody else? How can I see this differently? Is one day/week/month? Is the next person? Is the situation? Is the way that I am thinking about the situation?

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How Worry Works

Worry involves repeatedly scanning for, thinking about and predicting negative future situations or events. When we worry, we focus on the potential threats or risks associated with hypothetical situations or events and we tend to prepare for the worst. This tends to be safe than ‘silly’ way of thinking leads to high levels of anxiety, interferes with rational problem solving and limits our ability to think creatively and productively about the potential solution.

Although we tend to assume that worry means that we are attending to the problem, statistical analysis shows that worry does not change the outcome and increases our intolerance of uncertainty. Research into worry has demonstrated that approximately 85% of the things we worry about never actually happen. Of the remaining 15%, approximately 11% of outcomes are less severe than predicted. This leaves approximately 4% where worrying does not change the outcome. By continually worrying about negative things that hypothetically could not happen, we prevent the circumspection of our negative predictions and increase our reliance on worry as a proxy for problem solving.

So why do we worry? The answer is nested in the evolution of the human brain. Early humans were evolved to continually focus on potential risks and threats from their environment. This inbuilt risk of physical attack and survival. Although modern humans do not typically face the same physical threats to safety and survival, the same brain circuitry can be activated by perceived threats to identity, reputation, social acceptance, loss of control and uncertainty. We can activate this hypervigilant mode of thinking by overanalyzing and amplifying hypothetical negative interpretations.

The key to managing worry is to notice the primitive alarm system and switch to either problem solving where the outcome can be influenced or letting go where it is hypothetical or outside our control.

Exercise 33 Worry – Thinking Time

Start by setting a regular daily time aside as a dedicated worry-thinking time, e.g. 4:30pm (not just before going to bed). Once you have identified your daily worry-thinking time, use the following two-part exercise to capture, suspend and manage worrying.

Part 1 – Worry Suspension

What is the specific worry?	
What consequences am I predicting?	
What distressing feelings am I experiencing (Rate 0-10)	
What time am I suspending this worry for later consideration? (06:00:00)	

Part 2 – Worry – Thinking Time

What is the hard evidence supporting my predicted worry?	
What is the hard evidence against my predicted worry?	
What is the worst that could happen?	
What is the best that could happen?	
What is the most likely / realistic outcome?	
What are the consequences of worrying about this?	
What is a helpful way of thinking about this; what would I say to a friend?	
Can I trust myself to let go of this worry now?	Yes – Reschedule worry 0-10. No – Continue to next questions
What practical problem-solving options are open to me?	
What is the most helpful / effective course of action?	
What, where, who and when?	
How have my thoughts about the initial worry changed?	
How distressing is this issue now? (Re-rate 0-10)	

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Exercise 5 – Personal Values

Identifying values provides a basis for deciding what is truly important for us, for focusing on the areas of our life that are important to us and for re-evaluating a series of personal values in the decision-making. Your goals are the ‘What’; our values are the ‘Why’.

This assessment in the following exercise are not a list of the full range of values, however they may provide a good starting point for identifying the things that are important to you and the values that will be instrumental in helping you to obtain the ‘What’.

Value Description	High	Moderate	Low
Accepting: Open to new ideas and thoughts and being open to new information and judgment.			
Affection: Closely are emotionally close or strong feelings for others.			
Adventuring: Actively seeking opportunities and taking risks for success.			
Appreciating: Respectfully acknowledging and valuing the needs of others.			
Authenticity: genuine, true and honest.			
Caring: Involvement, care and concern for others.			
Challenging: Willing to examine and challenge what is believed, solving problems, challenging.			
Compassionate: Recognizing and using one's abilities to meet others' needs.			
Contending: Focused on one's own goals and interests.			
Cooperating: Working collaboratively and harmoniously with others.			
Courageous: Brave and persistent in the face of threat, risk or difficulty.			

Part 1 – What are the above values or instruments in the elements of my personal goals?

1	
1	
1	
1	
1	
1	

Part 2 – Implementation

1	Implementation	07:00:00	Implementation
---	----------------	----------	----------------

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Example ABC Form		
Antecedent What Happens Immediately Before the Unhelpful Behaviours?	Behaviour What are the Unhelpful Behaviours that I Want to Change?	Consequence What are the Positive / Negative Reinforcing Factors for these Behaviours?
Worried, Buzzy, loud or unpredictable situations where I don't know people or where I feel under pressure to perform.	Getting shrill, shouting in an aggressive manner, shouting or overemphasizing by throwing myself around.	Positive - Gain attention and praise for buying the tickets or going for the meal. Negative - distract me from feeling awkward or vulnerable.
	Helpful Behaviours Listening, using quietly assertive writing with good factual and social boundaries.	Positive reinforcement - reward for who I am rather than what I spend. Negative reinforcement - Feeling less like a fraud or feeling less exploited.

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Exercise 28 -The ABC Form in Functional Analysis		
Antecedent What Happens Immediately before the Unhelpful Behaviours?	Behaviour What are the Unhelpful Behaviours that I Want to Change?	Consequence What are the Positive / Negative Reinforcing Factors for these Behaviours?
		Helpful Behaviours

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SUICIDE ASSESSMENT TOOL

Assess suicidal ideation by asking the below questions:

1. Have you ever wanted to die? Have you ever thought about what it would be like if you were not alive anymore? Have you ever thought about hurting yourself? *Asking these questions have been shown to prevent suicide. Suicidal ideation is common and doesn't always lead to suicidal behavior/attempts. However, if the answer is "Yes" move on to the other questions.
2. Assess whether they have access to means to hurt themselves: If you were to hurt yourself, how would you do it? *May have to share with others so that they can limit their access.
3. Assess prior attempts: Have you ever tried to end your life or hurt yourself before? *Prior behavior is the best predictor of future behavior.
4. Assess protective factors that would prevent them from hurting themselves: What would make you not want to hurt yourself? What can I do to help you so that you won't hurt yourself? *It is vital that you share their positive attributes, importance, life purpose, and other positive reasons for living.
5. Ensure safety and create a safety plan if necessary.
6. Can we develop a written plan that you would agree to use if you ever want to hurt yourself or end your life?

*Share or call the Suicide Hotline (1-800-273-TALK/8255). Call 911. Alert parents. Connect them to other community resources (counselors, support systems, minister and/or their local pastor, etc.)

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COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS:
https://thinkcbt.com/images/Downloads/Other_CBT_Resources/THINK_CBT_EXERCISE_10_-_COGNITIVE_DISTORTIONS_V10.pdf

THOUGHT RECORD
https://thinkcbt.com/images/Downloads/Other_CBT_Resources/THINK_CBT_-_EXERCISE_12_CBT_THOUGHT_RECORD_V10.pdf

CHANGING THOUGHTS
https://thinkcbt.com/images/Downloads/Other_CBT_Resources/THINK_CBT_EXERCISE_33_-_WORRY_THINKING_TIME_V10.pdf

CATCHING THOUGHTS
https://thinkcbt.com/images/CATCH_CHECK_CHANGE_EXERCISE.pdf

PERSONAL VALUE - BOUNDARIES
https://thinkcbt.com/images/Downloads/Other_CBT_Resources/THINK_CBT_EXERCISE_5_-_PERSONAL_VALUES_V10.pdf

FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS
https://thinkcbt.com/images/Downloads/Other_CBT_Resources/THINK_CBT_EXERCISE_28_-_THE_ABC_FORM_V10.pdf

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APPENDIX G
FORGIVENESS PRE-SURVEY

Forgiveness Training Module Questionnaire

Self-Discovery Educational & Empowerment Program that Identifies Intergenerational Trauma in Women

Participant's Unique Identifier:

(Double Click Text Box to Enter Unique Identifier)

1. How do you pray? Please describe. Have you written your prayers, prayed audibly, or sat in silence? Please describe the experience.

2. Do you believe that God listens and answers your prayers? Please explain.

3. What do you believe is God's position on forgiveness? Do you believe God always forgives? What does God require of us concerning forgiveness?

4. Are there unforgivable acts? If so, what are they?

5. Have you forgiven anyone? If so, please elaborate. Is there anyone in your life that needs your forgiveness? If so, who? What is holding you from forgiving?

6. How has God helped you with forgiveness?

APPENDIX H

“IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL” LYRICS BY HORATIO SPAFFORD

“It is Well with My Soul” lyrics by Horatio Spafford

“It is Well with My Soul”

Lyrics by

Horatio Spafford

“It is Well with My Soul”

When peace like a river, attendeth my way
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say
It is well, it is well, with my soul

It is well
With my soul
It is well, it is well with my soul

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come
Let this blest assurance control
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate
And hath shed His own blood for my soul

It is well (it is well)
With my soul (with my soul)
It is well, it is well with my soul

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, o my soul!

It is well (it is well)
With my soul (with my soul)
It is well, it is well with my soul

It is well (it is well)
With my soul (with my soul)
It is well, it is well with my soul.

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